



SPECIAL REPORT

PROMISE KEEPERS' D.C. COVENANT AGENDA FOR CHURCHES REVEALED

By Albert James Dager



Prayer tepees dot the Capitol Mall landscape as an estimated one million Promise Keepers gather in a show of ecumenical unity.

Photo courtesy of Promise Keepers

With the blowing of the shofars—Hebrew trumpets made of rams' horns—Promise Keepers opened the program for its gathering at the Capitol Mall in Washington D.C. on October 4th, 1997. That morning, Promise Keepers made good its intentions to bring together one million Christian men in a show of ecumenical spiritual unity. The theme, “Stand in the Gap,” reflected the goal of Promise Keepers to intercede before God on behalf of the nation for its sins.

Secular media reports on the estimated size of the crowd ranged from as low as “a few thousand” to “hundreds of thousands”—a glaring attempt to downplay the impact of the gathering. It was not possible to obtain official figures since the National Parks Service no longer estimates the sizes of crowds on the Mall. Yet it was evident from overhead video shots by C-Span that the Mall was filled to overflowing.

At one point, Jack Hayford, pastor of Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, announced that there were over thirty thousand men in the side streets who were unable to reach the Mall area due to lack of space. Quickly admonishing the men

not to applaud, he asked that some go to the outer fringes and tell the men how to get to the adjacent Quad area where they could hear the messages through loudspeakers and view the proceedings on Jumbotron screens.

Paul Crouch, whose Trinity Broadcasting Network carried the event, reported that the National Parks Service had “unofficially” estimated the crowd size to be 1.3 million. Other figures have run as high as 1.5 million. Promise Keepers had stated that they did not want to focus on any number because they did not want to bring glory to men.

Even many critics admit that this was the largest religious gathering in the history of the nation’s capitol—perhaps the largest of any kind.

Not all in the media treated Promise Keepers with disdain. Some, even among the more liberal, actually offered kudos to Promise Keepers for their efforts to bring to the nation’s attention what is perceived as the abysmal treatment of women by men.

Rumors of Promise Keepers having invited Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam to join them had circulated for months prior to the event (due in part to unreliable rumormongering on the Internet). About a month before the event I spoke with Roger Chapman, head of media relations for Promise Keepers, who was surprised to hear of it and denied that Promise Keepers would ever do such a thing.

After the blowing of the shofars, the service began with Native-American Christians attired in cultural regalia, singing prayers in their Native tongues.

The announcement that Native Americans would open the festivities likewise brought unfounded speculation that Promise Keepers had sold out to non-Christian religions. But the Native Americans there were Christians. The purpose was to demonstrate Promise Keepers’ repentance toward Native Americans for the injustices handed them by the white man and by the federal government of the United States. It did concern me that even as these men prayed to the God of the Bible, and not to the “Great Spirit,” their cultural trappings contained animal fetishes

that characterize Native-American religion. But such things are often done through ignorance. Many western-European brethren still unknowingly keep pagan fetishes in their homes.

For some seven hours, most of the one million-plus men (and a few women) remained in one place.

Many of the 500,000 meals prepared by Promise Keepers went uneaten as the men focused on the messages, the music and the prayers that comprised the day's events. The men were encouraged to drop by the eating area on their way out after the event to pick up a free meal if they desired. They were also encouraged to leave the area in a cleaner condition than it was before they arrived. According to some reports, they seem to have complied. Unlike similar gatherings for political or social concerns, there were no incidents of arrests, violence, unruliness, or other negative behavior. Nationally-syndicated columnist Michael Medved contrasted the gathering with Woodstock whose message for peace and a clean environment resulted in many arrests for violence, theft, drugs and other problems, as well as an area strewn with tons of trash.

The men who attended the Promise Keepers rally were, for the most part, very reverent in their demeanor. They were very attentive, and exhibited much love toward each other.

A POLITICAL AGENDA?

In spite of the gathering taking place in the nation's capitol there were no overt political motives evident from the speakers. Many have accused Promise Keepers of being a stealth organization for the religious right, bent on politicizing their agenda against abortion, homosexuality and other concerns. Authors Alfred Ross and Lee Cokorinos of the Center for Democracy have stated:

In its conception and execution, Promise Keepers is one of the most sophisticated political movements the right wing has yet conjured up.¹

Time magazine reported that the center has developed a newsletter, *P.K. Watch*, specifically aimed at Promise Keepers. *P.K. Watch* accuses Promise Keepers of using seemingly benign teachings on prayer and social responsibility to create a grass roots network designed to buttress the religious right. Also, says *Time*, "In May, 59 religious liberals, including Joseph Hough, the dean of Vanderbilt University, and William Howard, the president of New York Theological Seminary, warned the nation's churches of the potential dangers of Promise Keepers."

The National Organization for Women (NOW) passed a resolution declaring Promise Keepers "the greatest danger to women's rights."²

NOW had planned a counterdemonstration, but the results were unspectacular. At the demonstration, NOW president Patricia Ireland angrily stated:

The Promise Keepers is the religious-political extremist movement reinventing its public image to create a more positive popular base.³

While a smattering of protesters from homosexual and feminist organizations demonstrated on the fringes of the crowd, Randy Philips, president of Promise Keepers, stated:

We have not come to exalt our gender as males. We have come to exalt the man Jesus Christ, who is Savior, who is Lord, and who is God!

No woman—no woman—should feel threatened by this gathering, because the ground is level at the foot of the cross. In the Kingdom there is neither male nor female! Every woman should have hope!

Philips was well aware of the criticism from so-called "women's rights groups." He also disputed claims that Promise Keepers had come to foist a political agenda upon the nation:

Why are we here? Why has a multitude of men from almost every city in the United States, and leaders from more than sixty countries, come to our nation's capitol? Is it to demonstrate political might? No!

Is it to display masculine strength? No!

Is it to take back the nation by imposing our religious values on others? No!

Is it to celebrate the fact that we as Christian men have been uncompromising models of integrity and purity? Tragically, no!

We have not come to demonstrate our power to influence men. We have come to display our spiritual poverty that Almighty God might influence us!

We believe that the ultimate answer to the moral crisis of society is not in partisan agendas, but living truth. We have nothing to offer any special interest group but the same mercy and grace that is available to all in the Bible—God's written revelation of faith and practice!

I have a request for those of you who love Jesus Christ but may have come here to voice your opinions on specific political issues. We have dedicated this as a sacred assembly. Would you suspend today your appeals before men, and would you unite with us in appealing in prayer before a righteous and just God?

Is He not able to move in our land above and beyond what we could ask or think?

As it turned out, Promise Keepers gave no fuel to their secular critics by which those critics could feed their angry rhetoric. From the outset, the speakers set the tone for personal introspection and repentance, eschewing the impulse to denounce the nation's leadership while poised in front of the Capitol Building. Said Jack Hayford:

1 Ron Stodghill II, "God of Our Fathers," *Time*, Oct. 6, 1997, p. 36.

2 *Ibid.*

3 NBC News, October 4, 1997.

We came not to express our rights, but as sinners to confess our wrongs.

Further, he asked the men to join him in prayer for the leaders at every level of our nation's governments and for the military.

The closest thing to a political "agenda," if it can be called that, was a message by Ronnie Floyd, who stated that Jesus wants the men to win their cities for God.

A REVIVAL?

Floyd's message took on the tone of prophecy—something rather unusual for any Baptist, let alone the Executive Committee Chairman for the Southern Baptist Convention. He stated that, as the Church overcomes the number one problem—its spiritual condition—God will bring revival and awakening that will transcend all ethnic and denominational lines.

Some two-and-a-half years ago in days of fasting and prayer, God gave to me, I believe, a special word. And that special word is as follows: that He is going to bring a mighty spiritual awakening and revival to America that will cross over all denominational lines, all cultural lines, all ethnic lines, and all racial lines, to the glory of God the Father!

In spite of Floyd's and other speakers' strong urging of the men to repent and to carry the Promise Keepers' agenda into their churches and communities, Dale Schlafer, Promise Keepers Revival and Awakening Vice President, stated that revival cannot be forced:

We can't force revival; we can't bring revival. That's a sovereign act of God. But if we do the things He says, which are to repent, and to seek His face, and to turn from our wicked ways, well then we have that possibility that perhaps, indeed, God will bring a revival.

This is a true statement that leaves revival open to possibility rather than as a certainty. No one can say what God will do in any given instance. Yet in view of Promise Keepers' strong ecumenism and use of psycho-spiritual methods in its ministry, one must ask why the spiritual sins of heresy and compromise of the Faith are ignored. Are these not also sins from which to repent? And are they not widely prevalent among the churches today? Yet these are not once addressed. On the contrary, Promise Keepers' covenant requires that doctrine not be judged. As long as someone claims to be born again by the Spirit of God and to love Jesus, we are to accept them without concern for anything else they believe, teach or practice.

While we concede that God can do whatever God wants to do, His Word nowhere speaks of a great revival or awakening in the last days. Rather, His Word is full of prophecies of apostasy—a great falling away—in the last days. Jesus even voiced concern with the words, "Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b).

Yes, a revival and/or awakening may take place before this. But what then? Will the Body of Christ gain the victory only to lose it before the Lord actually comes back? Why is there no hint of such a revival or awakening in His Word? And in spite of Dale Schlafer's claim that "we cannot force revival," Floyd's prophetic word to the men seemed to indicate otherwise:

The Bible tells us in Romans chapter thirteen, verse eleven, the following words: "And this do, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep, for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed."

What is Jesus saying to you today? Listen to it! He is saying, "Men, wake up!"

We are in a special season! And we need to wake up from our spiritual sluggishness! We need to wake up from our drowsiness! The alarm clock is going off in this nation, and it is no time for the men of this nation to push the "snooze" button! We need to fall in love with Jesus Christ all over again! And we need to go back home to our churches, and we need to wake up the Church! And we need to be broken men, and humble men, and just think what would happen in this nation if the men gathered in this mall would make a commitment to God that one day a week we would fast and pray for revival in America, revival in the Church, and revival in our personal lives!

Let me tell you what else Jesus is saying today. He is saying, "Men, win your city! Win your city!"...The heart of Jesus Christ today is for your city, for your town, for your village!

We don't need the Church to wake up so we, as men, can stand around a camp fire, hold hands and sing *Kumbaya*! We need the Church to be wakened so that we can go back and we can win our cities to faith and trust in Jesus Christ, and Him alone!

After exhorting the men to look for the Lord's soon return, Floyd again took up the cry:

So what is the message of Jesus to you today? Here it is: "Men, wake up! Men win your city! Men, watch for my return!"

There is no hint in Scripture that God's heart is for any city. He saves individuals from out of the nations.

Floyd has put words in God's mouth, telling us that God is saying something other than what He says in His Word. As far as his use of Romans 13:11 is concerned, no such idea of winning our cities is found in the context of that verse:

Owe no man anything, but to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the Law.

For this, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet." And if there is any other commandment, it is understood in this brief saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Love does no ill to his neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law.

And knowing the time, it is now high time to awaken out of sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Let us walk honestly, as in the daytime, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in cohabitation and lasciviousness, not in strife and envying.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:8-14)

The Lord was telling us through Paul that we are to live godly in this world and to exhibit love to all, which is the fulfillment of the entire Law of God. There is no idea of winning our cities to Christ.

Does this mean we should not engage in aggressive evangelism? By no means. But our motivation must be one of love for the lost, not an attempt to bring about a revival that is nowhere mentioned in Scripture. Should revival come it needn't be touted with pep talks. For that matter, true revival will insist upon purity of doctrine as a measure of one's commitment to truth. In all likelihood it will result in a massive coming out of the establishment churches in search of true fellowship in the Spirit. In no wise would it come with insistence that we go back to apostate churches and apostate pastors and give them our all—a central theme of Promise Keepers at all their conferences.

Floyd called this gathering “the most pivotal day in the history of the Church since the day of Pentecost.” Quite a statement in view of the Reformation and all that has transpired since Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of Wittenberg Cathedral.

EVANGELISM

James Ryle, pastor of Boulder Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Boulder, Colorado, and co-founder of Promise Keepers, gave an evangelistic message to the crowd. Ryle stressed the need for each of us to compare ourselves not to other men, but to Jesus Christ. Falling short, we would see our need to repent of our sins and turn to Christ as our only hope for salvation. Yet even within Ryle's otherwise sound Gospel message, a subjective approach to Scripture and salvation became evident in this statement:

One man got us all into this mess, and so God decided that one man would get us out. He looked down the corridor of time and carefully examined each of Adam's descendants. He looked at you, and He looked at me, to see if there was one among us who could stand in the gap and pay the price for the sins of mankind. There was none; not even one. So God did it Himself. God became a man—the man Christ Jesus. He lived among us. He was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin. And when Christ died on the cross it was not to pay the penalty for His own sins, for He had none. Therefore, God took the death of His holy Son and counted it as the payment for our sins.

A problem among charismatics (and many non-charismatics) is the penchant to say whatever comes to mind and think that it is some new revelation, or at least explains God's position better than Scripture does.

God did not look “down the corridors of time” to see if He could find a man to “stand in the gap” and pay the price for the sins of mankind. He knew from the beginning of creation that He was going to provide the sacrifice necessary for man's sin

(Ephesians 1:3-6; 3:9-11; Hebrews 4:3; 1 Peter 1:18-20; Revelation 13:8). He knew that fallen man could never pay the price himself. Nowhere is this fantastic scenario even hinted at in Scripture. To suggest that God even thought He could find a son of Adam worthy of such a task is to denigrate the very nature of Christ. This may seem trivial in view of the greater truths contained in Ryle's message, and it probably never occurred to him that he might be denigrating Christ, but such subjectivity is the basis for more serious spiritual errors that have gripped the churches of late. It is always sad to see a Gospel message marred by such subjective, unscriptural imaginings.

But this was not a shortcoming of Ryle only. Virtually all the men on the platform that day interspersed subjective, extra-biblical and even unbiblical remarks that were overlooked by the vast majority of the people present as well as those viewing the event on television.

Joseph Garlington, senior pastor of Covenant Church of Pittsburgh, enumerated the primary sins of the nation and of the Church as: 1) neglecting to pray; 2) disobedience to God's Word; 3) Sexual immorality.

David Bryant, founder and president of Concerts for Prayer International, led the crowd in silently confessing these sins. He then called upon the men to form small groups and to pray brief prayers asking God to pour out His Spirit upon the nation.

While Promise Keepers does present some truth in its quest for spiritual manhood, it also assumes too much regarding the guilt of men in general. An attitude throughout the gathering was one of chastisement for being men who are de facto guilty of abuse. This was reflected in the messages that immediately followed video-taped testimonies of weeping men displayed on the Jumbotron screens strategically placed throughout the Mall.

Focusing on the problem of abuse and abandonment (which is certainly a problem in society), Bruce Fong, professor at Multnomah Biblical Seminary Graduate School, laid the problem at the feet of Christian men:

How do we measure up? Not well. It's time to confess.

Rather than “some of us,” the blanket “we” transferred the guilt of the few to the many, giving the impression that the majority of believing men are guilty of abuse and abandonment. This inclusive charge of guilt was also found in the message by Isaac Canales, assistant professor at Fuller Theological Seminary:

I feel that we all need to confess before God, our sins of abuse against our families—especially our wives, our kids, against our friends. And so I'm going to ask you to do something right now. This is not a time to clap or applaud; this is a real serious moment; this is the heart of this stuff, is to confess before God.

All of us have abused! If you haven't, would you join in solidarity with everyone else? But the Word of God says that we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God!

Canales instructed the men to take pictures of their loved ones out of their wallets, or to write the names of loved ones on a piece of paper. All were to do this. He then had them pray after him:

Almighty God, I confess that I have been an abusive man—as a husband, as a friend, as a father, as a son, as a

brother. I have sinned against you, myself, my community, my nation and my home. I have sacrificed my family on the altar of machismo, selfishness, greed, power, pleasure and personal ambition. Oh, God, I need your help.

Daniel Juster, pastor of Beth Messiah Congregation in Gaithersburg, Maryland, confessed, "We men have sinned grievously and caused terrible pain."

Promise Keepers may not have gone to Washington D.C. with a political agenda, but their approach to abuse is certainly politically correct. In line with the philosophy of Gary Smalley, a major P.K. mentor, the Promise Keepers flagellate themselves on perceived abuse which may be nothing more than normal human selfishness engaged in by both husband and wife. (See our special report, *Gary Smalley, the Psychology of Matriarchy*.) The approach is to blame the man for any negative emotions in the household and to place him at the beck-and-call of his wife and children. To strongly oppose his wife's or his children's desires, or to work hard at the risk of not spending what social psychologists consider sufficient "quality time" with his family, is considered "abuse." This is not a biblical definition of abuse, but a modern psychological definition.

Perhaps many in the crowd that day have been genuinely abusive to their wives or children; perhaps some in the leadership of Promise Keepers are guilty as well. But the approach of Promise Keepers is to transfer that guilt to all men by implication. Non-abuse is considered the exception rather than the norm.

Furthermore, there is the implicit assumption that these men are still abusive even if they had confessed their sins and repented of them when they came to Christ. They were already forgiven. The problem is that some wives and children, as well as pastors, refuse to let the men forget that they were abusive at one time, regardless of how they may have changed since coming to Christ in true repentance. In spite of having confessed it before, they must confess it again, this time using a psychological catharsis to relieve the pain of that sin.

Tony Evans, senior pastor and co-founder of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, built upon the guilty-man theme by offering some truth along with some error:

The story of a nation is the story of its families written large. And if we want to see the things change out here we've got to start in our homes. A messed-up man will produce a messed-up family that will produce a messed-up church, that will result in a messed-up neighborhood, that will cause a messed-up city, that will bring about a messed-up county, that will result in a messed-up state that will reside in a messed-up country, that will bring about a messed-up world! So if we want better worlds composed of better countries inhabited by better states made up of better counties that are composed of better cities inhabited by better neighborhoods illuminated by better churches made up of better families, we'd better go home better men!

This is very clever rhetoric for which Tony Evans is well known. He has a clever, hard-hitting way of delivering his messages, but it often masks the error he is espousing.

This long diatribe has no real substance because it is categorically untrue. The world is at enmity with God by its very nature. And it doesn't matter how pure the assemblies are. In fact, the purer the assemblies, the more tribulation they can expect from the world. A perfect assembly may result in better individuals who come to Christ, but it is not going to result in a better world; it will only bring out the worst in the world.

Jesus said:

"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'The servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.

"But this happens so that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law: 'They hated Me without a cause.'" (John 15:18-25)

The more godly and Christlike believers become, the more hated by the world they will be—yes, even by the religious "Christians" that comprise the greater number in our churches.

So while Evans' clever and emotion-stirring message may sound good, it just isn't biblical.

He did rightly encourage the men to take their biblical leadership in the home. As long as they don't take the Gary Smalley approach they might do well.

RECONCILIATION

About half-way through the program Jack Hayford, who had been acting as moderator, introduced two issues that would make up the Promise Keepers' covenant for that day:

What we're talking about right now are two small steps, but they're not easy ones. And the impact would be a giant leap for mankind. And it's if we who name the name of the living Christ and walk in the love of God will come to terms with two issues that are coming on the table as we seek to construct a covenant that would please God [sic], and sign our name to it, and say, "As men who seek to be godly men, we will covenant these things."

Here's the two tough ones:

There is a horrible sectarianism that rips the Body of Christ. I'm not talking about a quest for one Church. We're talking about the people of God acknowledging each other, that we are all one people, though we are in different families, and persuasions and practices.

We love Jesus Christ and have been born of the Spirit of God. But loved ones, listen to me, please. We have been taught to suspect those that are not the same as us. We have been taught to look down on those who are different in their practice or their doctrine.

We come to the toughest point because we have had our hearts calloused, not so much by an act of will as by the culture of our various church lives. The circumstance we face requires an unusual availability to the Holy Spirit, or we won't see the way. Because voices will rise to say that if you repent of separatism and sectarianism in the Body of Christ, then you have lost a quest for a purity of truth. But I want to tell you that the truth has been incarnate, and His name is Jesus! And anybody that loves Jesus is in the truth if they walk following Him, no matter what group they're a part of! Can you shout an "Amen" to that, please?

The men shout, "Amen!"

Now hear me! We're coming to open our hearts to be dealt with in that area. After that we'll deal with the equally-difficult, but even more painful issue of racial insensitivity and racism, mostly unseen in ourselves.

First, the matter of the Church becoming one Body. Our brother, Max Lucado, comes to lead us.

Denominational Reconciliation

Before addressing Lucado's remarks, it is important to note a few things about Jack Hayford's position. Some time ago Hayford repented of having held Roman Catholicism to be an erroneous religious system, claiming that it is not as different as he had at one time believed. Since that time he has been a champion of the ecumenical movement. His humble demeanor and soft-spoken manner imply a love for truth and a love for God that is unquestioned by most. But his position of not only accepting, but promoting, Roman Catholicism as a legitimate expression of biblical faith does not speak love for truth. He says that he is not talking about "a quest for one Church." But that is exactly the ambition and work of the Roman Catholic Church through its ecumenical efforts. Vatican II affirmed that all efforts toward reconciliation with the "separated brethren" must be for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Church, with the expressed intent to bring all Christians under papal authority.

Hayford knows this. So does Billy Graham. So does Max Lucado. So does Pat Robertson. So does Jack Van Impe. So does the leadership of the Promise Keepers. But knowing this has not dissuaded all these men from charging headlong into the ecumenical milieu with disregard for doctrine and practice.

I cannot speak to their motives, but I can speak to their actions. This is a great deception that will result in many brethren either falling into spiritual error or falling under the hammer of ecumenically-minded church leaders who are willing to sacrifice the flock for the sake of their larger religio-political agenda of attaining a "better" world.

It goes without saying that those who would withhold fellowship from other brethren in Christ on the basis of a denominational affiliation would be sinning. But just as the Holy Spirit cleanses us from the sin of racism, it cleanses us from the sin of

denominationalism at the point of true conversion. We recognize that true brethren are in churches of every name. But it has been more difficult for even some true believers to realize this truth. Some denominations have stressed fellowship among their own to the exclusion of all others. Yet this is not necessarily the belief or desire among some of those denominations' members. True believers in Jesus Christ recognize their brethren in Christ regardless of what name their fellowship falls under.

Promise Keepers' approach to denominational reconciliation has proven to be an ecumenical free-for-all when it comes to doctrine which is still a necessary criterion to true fellowship in the Spirit. They insist that in order to be accepted into fellowship one need merely proclaim that he is born again by the Spirit of God and trust in Jesus for his salvation. But this ignores the serious areas of doctrinal distinctions that nullify the truth of such a proclamation for many who state it.

An additionally bad thing about the Promise Keepers' approach is the binding of trusting men to a covenant not to speak against any religious institution. This will effectively prevent them from proselytizing not only Roman Catholics, but Mormons and anyone else whose confession of faith in Jesus must be taken at face value.

I am reminded of a car I saw some years ago in southern California. On its rear bumper were stickers: "Jesus is Lord!" and "Read the Book of Mormon." One's confession of Jesus as Lord does not necessarily mean that one is a true believer.

The Promise Keepers' approach to such broad ecumenism is subjective religious error, and the churches in America are falling for it wholesale. A lot of truth interspersed among significant lies will persuade most people who, for any number of reasons, are not thinking. Not the least of those reasons is that they don't know God's Word and/or don't have the discernment to understand an error when they hear it. Sadly, this includes most leadership in the churches today.

The following arguments offered by Max Lucado seemingly convey truth, but underneath they persuade men to follow the ecumenical deception. In the process of confessing the sin of sectarianism, Lucado states:

We have focused on controversies that divide us, rather than focus on the cross that unites us.

This is the old "don't focus on the negative; think positive" approach to truth. Often the "controversies" center on important doctrinal issues. But how can two walk together unless they are in agreement (Amos 3:3)? Just because there is a focus on the spiritual errors that divide true believers from false believers does not mean that there is any lack of love on the part of true believers.

Lucado continued:

And our prayer this afternoon is that God can, once and for all, do a miracle of the millennium—that He can inaugurate a new day—that He can bring about a new era—something that our eyes have never seen. Why? Because Jesus says that when we are one in Christ, then the world will be won for Christ!...The problem in evangelism is not out there, but it is in here. The world will be won *for* Christ when we are one *in* Christ!

Nowhere does Scripture say that the world will ever be won for Christ, no matter how “one” the “Church” is. Again, a clever play on words, a clever ploy, to get the men to agree to an erroneous, subjective belief that has no basis in Scripture.

The idea of “winning the world for Christ” is appealing, and it is certainly the hope of Christian Reconstructionists and Manifested Sons of God, but it isn’t biblical. Why? Because the whole world lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19). And it will continue to lie in wickedness until Jesus returns because the prince of this world is Satan:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is necessary for you that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they do not believe on me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” (John 16:7-11)

Satan is judged, but he is still allowed to rule over the world until the Lord returns to vanquish him to the bottomless pit for a season (Revelation 20:1-3).

In his speech, Lucado used John 17:20-21 to assert the need for unity so that the world would know Christ:

“Nor do I pray for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word, 21 so that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.” (John 17:20-21)

To compromise truth in order to effect the knowledge of God in Christ does not ultimately serve God. We must be united in truth. Even if the world did know that God sent Christ, it would still hate Him. The “Christ” that the world loves is the mild-mannered Clark Kent who does only what the world wants him to do to protect them from bad things. But the judge of the universe who convicts of sin and judges unrighteousness is not the Christ that the world wants.

Even if the world believed that Christ was sent by God it would not change anything. The devils believe, and they tremble (James 2:19).

If there was any “miracle of the millennium,” it was the Reformation and what followed—not the false unity that Promise Keepers espouses. Behind today’s ecumenical climate is Roman Catholicism’s hatred of the Reformation that broke its teeth. And many leaders of the non-Catholic churches today are being reeled in after swallowing the bait, hook, line and sinker.

Lucado readily admits that men cannot unite the churches—that it must be the work of the Holy Spirit in response to prayer. But in the process he polarizes those who would insist on sound doctrine as a basis for fellowship. He rightly had the men examine themselves for any ungodly offenses against other brothers personally. But true to the Promise Keepers’ ecumenical form, he then transfers the guilt of personal offense to that of institutional offense:

Have there been any occasions in which you have categorized or pigeonholed religious groups unfairly—in which you have made blanket summaries about entire

denominations or groups? If so, at this hour confess to God that you apologize for defaming the Body of Christ.

Denominations and groups are not members of the Body of Christ. Individual believers, regardless of the group to which they belong, are members of the Body of Christ. Of course, to shun an individual just because he is a member of a particular denomination is sin, provided that individual is a true believer. But denominations and religious groups “pigeonhole” themselves because of their unique, unbiblical teachings and practices.

All denominations, cults and world religions have well-known tenets that invite scrutiny. Are we to forego the scripturally-mandated rule of testing all things just so we won’t carry the P.K. guilt of “divisiveness?” There is nothing wrong with making “blanket summaries about entire denominations or groups” if those summaries are supported by their public doctrines and practices. The overall context of the Promise Keepers’ ecumenical agenda is that *any* categorizing or pigeonholing is wrong.

After praying for forgiveness for speaking negatively about religious groups, Lucado had the men turn to each other in small groups and look eye-to-eye in order to confess their divisiveness:

And now we ask you to please turn in groups of two and three and face your brethren eye-to-eye for a very important part of this healing process. The sin of sectarianism is a public sin, hence our confessions must be public confessions. And if the Lord has brought to your mind any time in which you have spoken evil of another portion of the Body of Christ, we ask you—we urge you—as you look eye-to-eye into the face of another brother, to confess that.

This is nothing short of coercion that does not belong in a mass rally. Sins are to be dealt with in the context of the local assembly, not in an ecumenical setting. By such a ploy the men are put in a difficult position. They must confess that they spoke “evil” (undefined) of another religious group (undefined as Christian or non-Christian) if they have ever said anything negative about Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, or any other cults. By such a confession they admit that it is a sin to do so. They are now polarized against rejecting what is to come in the person of Michael Timmis, a member of Promise Keepers’ Board of Directors and a leader in the Roman Catholic charismatic movement, who takes the platform to deride “sectarianism.”

Sectarianism is disunity; it is division; it is the seed of the devil! We do not work for unity; we work to end and erase disunity! Unity is of God; disunity is of man. And this disunity applies whether it is sectarianism or racism!

What’s the difference whether one is working for unity or to erase disunity. (I don’t want sixty cents; I want forty cents less than a dollar.) God’s Word demands separation from religious error. And the errors of Timmis’s Roman Catholic doctrines effectively nullify the truth of God’s Word. (See our special reports *Six Roman Catholic Doctrines That Nullify Salvation By Grace* and *Roman Catholicism: Is It A Cult?*)

God created us as equals before Him, but we have divided ourselves! We must rid ourselves of the disunity that is in our spirits, to go back to the way God created us!

God created the Church to be His bride—to be married to Him—to be pure! Therefore, to be in a state of disunity is a sin before God!

This is the Roman Catholic position on the Reformation that it has tirelessly opposed through torture, murder and other persecutions of great magnitude. Unable to reverse the Reformation through these means it has resorted to cajoling non-Catholic Christians back to the papacy through deceptive, ecumenical means.

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, there is only one true church created by God to be His bride—the Roman Catholic Church. Foolish non-Catholics think that when the wolf talks about “one flock and one shepherd,” it is speaking about Christ as the shepherd of His people. In reality it is speaking of the pope as the one shepherd over Christ’s people. Those who are not in subjection to the papacy do not have a full measure of salvation, and are excluded from communion. So who is divisive? Perhaps Timmis should work to reform his own church before attempting to reform his “separated brethren” with the Roman Catholic guilt trip.

There can never be any unity between the Roman Catholic and the ex-Roman Catholic, because the latter is anathema—damned to eternal torment—unless he returns to “mother Church.” Tell me, a former Roman Catholic, that any Holy Spirit unity with the Beast is possible!

The Vatican has no qualms about its agents posing as ecumenists to break the resolve or resistance against Roman Catholic power. Its deception is masked within benevolent appeals to unity. And in spite of the fact that these men were already coerced into confessing the great sin of “sectarianism,” Timmis leads them in another such prayer just to make sure it takes hold in their consciousness. Throughout the Promise Keepers’ proceedings it is implied that separation for any reason is equated with hatred toward one’s brother.

After Timmis left the stage amidst great applause, Lucado again prayed for unity and forgiveness for divisiveness. They just couldn’t get enough of this self-condemning catharsis to condition the men for the great takeover by Rome.

And still it wasn’t enough. Michael Timmis returned to pray a prayer of confession yet again. In the process he preached to the men about what repentance from that divisiveness really means. Such prayers are not so much a conversation with God as they are political posturing—a purposeful attempt to make sure all others “get the message.”

To cement the polarization against those who warn of the Roman Catholic ecumenical deception Timmis prayed:

We pray that the Holy Spirit fall on this incredible gathering and on those watching on television, and convict every single one of us. Father, we recognize that we do have doctrinal differences, and that they have existed since the first days of the Church. But Father, we will not let these differences destroy our unity as brothers and sisters in Christ.

And we know, Father, that this applies to Protestants of all persuasions; it applies to the Orthodox Church; it applies to Roman Catholics, of which I am one! It applies

to all who truly believe and love the great creeds and confessions of the Church! So Father, from this day forward, as we leave here, let us look upon us [sic] and say, “Behold, how they love one another! They must have been with Jesus Christ!” Amen!

To this the great multitude shouted a loud ovation and gave applause. The men present did not understand that when a Roman Catholic leader mentions “the great creeds and confessions of the Church,” he is speaking of the Roman Catholic Church. These creeds and confessions include belief in Mary as co-redemptrix with Christ for our salvation, among other unbiblical and idolatrous tenets.

Taking the stage, Jesse Miranda, professor at Azusa Pacific University in Pasadena, California, affirmed Timmis’s prayer, and stated that we all have “one Lord, one baptism.”

Evidently Miranda doesn’t know, or has conveniently forgotten, that the baptism of Roman Catholicism is not the baptism of the Scriptures. It is a baptism of spiritual regeneration—one of seven sacraments that must be partaken of in order to receive God’s grace and forgiveness. Not to mention the indulgences that can still be bought to free souls from a mythical purgatory because the death of Christ on the cross alone wasn’t sufficient to purchase their salvation.

It is important to note that Promise Keepers did not merely urge the men to ignore doctrinal differences, they cleverly led them into a *covenant* not to consider doctrine as a barrier to unity with anyone.

What is the message so clearly presented here? It is that no one is to judge Roman Catholicism—or Mormonism, for that matter—and to attempt to proselytize members of these religions would break the covenant into which they just entered!

It’s one thing to recognize that individual Roman Catholics may have a heart for God and that they are merely held back from freedom in Christ through ignorance perpetrated upon them by their church. It’s another thing to covenant not to enlighten them and, hopefully, bring them out of the darkness in which Roman Catholicism keeps them.

All those who entered into that covenant are bound before God not to break it. For to break a covenant is to sin. So if they choose to ignore the covenant and witness to Catholics, they will be guilty of sin. But I would urge them to repent of the sin of entering into the covenant in the first place—recognizing that it is a violation of God’s command not to take oaths (Matthew 5:34-37)—and thus free themselves to witness to Catholics at every opportunity.

But, again, Promise Keepers lays the guilt of the few upon the many. And in this case, they convolute the truth to make it appear as if denominational disunity is the fault of non-Catholic Christians. In truth, it is the Roman Catholic Church that has pronounced anathema against all former Roman Catholics. It is the Roman Catholic Church that withholds its communion from non-Catholics (and thankfully so, considering the error of the Mass and the doctrine of transubstantiation).

It is the Roman Catholic Church that claims to be the only true church of Jesus Christ. It is the Roman Catholic Church that claims salvation is available only through obedience to the pope. It is the Roman Catholic Church that holds its “sacraments” as

essential for receiving God's grace. And it is the Roman Catholic Church that insists that unity can be achieved only when all the "separated brethren" come back under the authority of the papacy. McCartney and Timmis are aware of these facts. But their non-Catholic dupes applaud their deceptive words.

Racial Reconciliation

As soon as someone suggests that there is a problem with any call for ethnic reconciliation, he risks being labeled a "racist." Certainly there can be nothing wrong with brethren in Christ calling for unity without regard to race. And as I've said in the past, race should not be an issue when it comes to embracing one as a brother in Christ. However, it is not Promise Keepers' call for unity without regard to race with which I take issue; it is Promise Keepers' method of presenting its case.

The liberal media is infamous for its lopsided approach to race relations. As far as they are concerned, racism is white, and all whites are latent racists at best. All other races are, de facto, victims of white racism. There is seldom, if ever, any addressing of racism in the hearts of non-whites.

The reason is obvious: white European civilization has dominated the world's political, economic and social landscapes. In the process, because of the inherent military power and the selective jurisprudence of western European culture, other cultures have had to take a lesser position of power. This has been especially true in integrated societies such as that of the United States.

Because large segments of white society have expressed in the past a desire to remain separate from influence by other ethnic cultures it has been deemed racist by definition. The fact that other cultures wish to remain separate from white culture (or from other ethnic cultures, for that matter) does not figure in the equation of liberal opinion makers. No, the dominant western European society must be branded "racist" for the simple reason that it must be brought down if any attempt at global government is to be achieved.

Yet all of this should have no bearing on believers in Christ. Whether or not Western Civilization survives is in the hands of God; the best we can do is pray for His will to be done—and quickly, regarding the Lord's coming again. It isn't up to the believers to champion one culture over others, or to denigrate one culture in deference to others. To do so plays into the hands of the anti-Christ, global-fascist agenda.

And this is the problem with the Promise Keepers' approach to racial reconciliation. As we examine the messages and the prayers of the various ethnic representatives on the platform of the Washington D.C. gathering, we will see a close correlation between Promise Keepers' position and that of our present globalist-oriented government and media.

To open the segment on racial reconciliation Jack Hayford confessed that at one time he never thought of himself as a racist. But one day the Lord convicted him that whenever he shook hands with a black person he somehow felt that his hand was dirty. After he confessed his sin he could freely embrace black Christians without such feelings.

After his confession Hayford introduced the first speaker on racial reconciliation, A.R. Bernard, senior pastor of New York

Christian Life Center. Bernard began by extolling Martin Luther King, Jr. as a great Christian champion of unity:

On August 28, 1963, right here in this city of Washington, D.C., more than 200,000 people walked from the Washington Monument to the Lincoln Memorial in the most massive protest demonstration this country had ever seen. They came to support pending civil rights legislation. And many came to see and hear the man that would subpoena the conscience of this nation before the judgment seat of authority—the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.

Bernard spoke of how, just a few months prior, when King was in a Birmingham jail cell, he expressed his deepest disappointments in the white Christian Church and its leadership. His remarks were in response to a published statement by eight clergymen who denounced the demonstrations he led in Birmingham, while failing to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about those demonstrations:

With only a few notable exceptions, those he thought would be his strongest allies—the Christian Church—became his greatest opponents.

Many who were not antagonistic simply substituted caution for courage and remained silent behind the security of stained-glass windows. In the midst of glaring injustices perpetrated upon the negro, he watched as white churchmen stood by, speaking hypocritical religious irrelevancies. In the middle of a call of God to rid the nation of racial and economic injustice, he heard ministers say, "Those are social issues, with which the Gospel has no real concern." He watched as many churches committed themselves to a Gospel that focused on Heaven, with no relevance to the conditions on earth. A Gospel reminiscent of the message taught to African slaves, giving them hope only in death—the life hereafter—but no hope in the life that now is....

Here we are, the Church of Jesus Christ, a generation later, and we still have to repent—not merely of the sin of commission, but the greater sin of omission—the sin of silence and non-involvement.

The words of Jesus Christ ring true today, out of the Gospel of Luke: "Woe to you religious leaders because you tithe your possessions and offer up sacrifices, but you have neglected justice and the love of God, especially for your brothers. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone."

After chastising the white churches, Bernard did not excuse "ethnic" Christians from responsibility. But their responsibility was for the sin of complacency:

My African-American Christian brothers, don't you think for one minute that I stand here putting the totality of blame on the white Christian Church....

But my African-American Christian brothers, my Native-American Christian brothers, my Asian Christian brothers, my Latino Christian brothers, my Messianic Jewish Christian brothers, I know personally the pain of our rejection by the dominant society! But many of us have re-

signed ourselves to complacency into an attitude of donothingness, while others have turned to hatred and bitterness, and like Cain, who could not handle his rejection, turned his anger on his own brother. Some of you here today struggled to get here. And your struggle to get to this meeting was because of the same hatred, bitterness and suspicion that I talked about, and some would not even come. We are not exempt, as men of color, from repentance. We, too, must repent of our complacency; we, too, must repent of our hatred and bitterness, and best we do it today under the anointing of God! Because there are other organizations trying to capture us and turn us away from Jesus Christ.

As I considered this powerful speech by Bernard, I had to admit to ambiguous feelings. There was so much that I could agree with in human terms. At the same time, I felt that much of what was said and proposed is not suitable to the true Body of Christ, no matter what racial ancestry one claims.

Many Christians do not consider Martin Luther King, Jr. a true believer for several reasons, not the least of which were his many associations with and support for communist individuals and organizations, his infamous womanizing, and lack of a strong biblical stance in other areas. Be that as it may, we have to ask ourselves, where would blacks be today were it not for people like King who led the fight for civil rights.

Yes, the reforms have resulted in reverse discrimination and other evils, but if we keep these things in the proper perspective we will recognize that they are all part of the condition of a fallen world. As such, they are to be expected.

But what of King's and, subsequently, Bernard's charge against "the Church" in America? Is it justified? If we think of "the Church" as an institution comprised of believers and non-believers alike, yes it is justified. But that's the problem with these men's position, and with the position of Promise Keepers. They all consider "the Church" to be an ecclesiastical institution rather than the Holy Spirit-united individuals who strive toward Christlikeness through humility and self-sacrifice. The charge of racism against the institutional churches is justified; the charge of racism against the true Body of Christ is not justified. True believers are few in number and powerless in the world system.

It isn't that I find myself disagreeing with the charge against the institutions, because I have my own charges against the institutions. Were they to stop calling themselves "the Church," we would not have the problem. But unfortunately even many true believers have not yet come to understand that the institution to which they have attached themselves is not the true Body of Christ, no matter how biblical that institution's confession of faith may be.

The truth is that glaring injustices are still perpetrated against the true Body of Christ, regardless of race. But rather than allowing us to wallow in self-pity, God's Word tells us to rejoice when we suffer wrongly, counting it a privilege to suffer for Christ. There is no privilege before God, nor are there spiritual rewards for suffering for race. Promise Keepers should understand the distinctions.

In the process of wrongly charging the Body of Christ with racism, Bernard committed several errors that betray a woeful

lack of understanding. One such error is that he thinks it was God who called the nation to rid itself of "racial and economic injustice."

While the Lord does call true believers to practice love and charity toward all, particularly within the Body of Christ, He has also told us not to expect justice from the world. True "economic justice" belongs in the Body of Christ (1 John 3:13-18). But calls for "economic justice" in the world more often reflect a socialist desire for the "redistribution of wealth." It is based on envy of what others have been able to acquire for themselves in terms of material wealth.

While these people are greatly concerned about holding the nation "accountable to those values and those principles" of America's "Judeo-Christian heritage," they seldom are concerned about the values and principles of God's Word, which demands separation from false brethren.

Because Bernard's passion for racial and economic justice supersedes his understanding of the differences between the institutional churches and the true Body of Christ, he also lays the sin of "non-involvement" at our feet.

We are called to proclaim the Gospel and to individually bind the wounds of the afflicted, feed the hungry, and do all we can to demonstrate the love of Christ. But to take on the world's injustices would be to fight a losing battle for two reasons: 1) they are too big and too diversified for us; 2) we are not called by God to do so.

If this sounds defeatist it is not. For in the long run the Lord Himself will return to right all wrongs. In the meantime, there is no end to the number of injustices and causes to which Christians may be compelled by other men to take up.

For every cause in the heart of one man there are dozens of other causes in the hearts of other men. To join one cause will result in accusation of sin for failure to involve oneself in another cause, all of which may be rightly labeled "a fight against injustice." Which do we choose? Are we free to choose one and neglect the others? If we listen to men we will constantly be filled with guilt and self-loathing for not jumping to their tune.

We don't see the early believers complaining and demonstrating against the world's injustices in their day. We are told to rejoice in tribulation. God uses these things according to His purposes. We should do what we can, but we should also trust Him without complaining and without laying guilt upon others for our particular conviction regarding some "just cause."

The true Body of Christ (not the institutional churches) has already dealt with the problem of racism. Some individuals may not have been convicted in their hearts of racism, and it's good that they hear a straightforward message to that effect. But Bernard's message is not just a call for racial reconciliation; it is a call to militancy for his particular social cause. And as much as attempts are made to make us all feel guilty for the sins of others, true believers in Christ should not accept that guilt trip.

Following Bernard, John Dawson, Urban Missions International Director for YWAM, confessed the guilt of all whites in a tearful prayer uttered while upon his knees:

Lord, as an Anglo I am really embarrassed and ashamed by what I've heard, because it's true. And, I can't speak for all of my people group, but Lord, I just take this position,

and ask any of my brothers who are Anglo to join me. And Lord, I confess that we are an arrogant people—that we have deeply wounded African-American, and Jewish, and Native-American, and Hispanic friends in the story of this land. That we—even unconsciously, the way we stand, the way we talk, the way we think about ourselves—project an incredible sense of superiority about everything. We don't even see it. And Lord, I just confess it.

Allow me to interject that we cannot confess for our race, nor can we bear the guilt for our race. We can confess our personal sins only. While God's prophets confessed for Israel, they were the intermediaries established at that time to do so. Now all of God's people have access to the Throne of Grace and we don't need any mediators except Jesus Christ. The races cannot have mediators. Each individual in each race must come to Christ on his own. Dawson's confession may make him feel good but it has no spiritual significance in terms of God's forgiveness.

Dawson continued by confessing how greedy, hate-filled and untrustworthy Anglos are. But so are all races without the tempering of the Holy Spirit. History has shown that other races, when dominant, did the same things.

The politically-correct thing today is to hate western Europeans for having done bad things, while refusing to acknowledge any good that they did. It is also politically correct to heap blame for the bad upon all whites without crediting the many Christians who brought the Gospel to the nations.

If Hayford and Dawson have been guilty of racism it's good that they confess that sin as an example to others. But instead they transferred their own guilt to all white Christians when that transference is neither justified nor efficacious.

In the midst of this guilt-transferring self-flagellation, Dawson brought some strange doctrine into his prayer:

My people and my children are cursed because of this. We know the victimizer becomes the greater victim than the victim because of Your judgment.

Dawson's error is that of most who believe in so-called "generational curses," misinterpreting Exodus 20:5:

"You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them, for I, YHWH your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me."

This has nothing to do with blame, but with consequences. And that, for those who hate God. God's judgment upon those who hate Him is to destroy their posterity even up to four generations. But He will not lay the blame for a father's sins upon the son:

"The soul that sins, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezekiel 18:20)

Any son who turns to God in faith and repentance for his own sins will be saved. Christians, especially, do not bear the sins of ungodly ancestors, and it does no good to confess what others have done. Dawson fails to make a distinction between what the power brokers of western Europe did, and what true believers in

Christ did. He identifies himself with the worldly establishment rather than with the common man—particularly believers in Christ.

He continued by confessing as sin a "preference for and a pride concerning our own culture."

Well, pride in anything is a sin, but preference for a particular culture is not a sin. And which race has not exhibited pride? What about all the cries for "Black Power!" "Hispanic Power!" "Asian Power!"—even "Gray Power!" (relating to seniors).

As far as preference goes, each ethnic group generally prefers its own culture. There are some cultural elements that some wish to retain, which are not sinful. Some elements are sinful. It is virtually impossible to separate any culture from its religious contexts simply because religion is the motivating force behind all cultures—even so-called "atheistic" cultures that have come into existence only of late. The religious impetus behind western European culture has been, for centuries, a biblical ethic. This is true, even if not all western Europeans are true believers in Christ. When choosing which cultural elements to retain, Christians who hail from any culture must carefully weigh those things that are not in conformity to biblical truth and reject them.

Everyone is at least a little uncomfortable in a culture that is significantly different from the one to which they are accustomed. This doesn't mean they hate or even dislike those who prefer that different culture. Let's not forget the many western European missionaries who left their comfort zones to take the Gospel to cultures that, to them, were strange and even dangerous.

Bernard's message, and those that followed, purposely aimed at filling white Christians with a sense of self-loathing for sins they have never committed, or that they repented of when they came to Christ.

This was reinforced by a black brother who embraced Dawson after his prayer and told him that he accepts his forgiveness. I perceive that he meant to say that he accepts Dawson's apology. He confessed his own sin, not of racism, but of allowing victimization by whites to cause hatred in his heart and in the hearts of his black brothers. As a result of that victimization, black men have not taken responsibilities for their own children.

This is the "everyone is a victim" mentality that permeates society. It is largely due to the psychologizing of society by godless elements that believe man to be intrinsically good.

People do not sin because they are victims. God's Word never excuses sin on the basis of victimization. To do so would remove guilt for sin and hinder any true reconciliation with God.

Immediately after this prayer, Tom Claus, founder and president of Christian Hope Indian Eskimo Fellowship stepped up. His prayer for racial reconciliation also focused on the injustices of whites toward his people:

Dear precious Father, the God of all grace—the God of all races in all places, I call on you today on behalf of my Christian Native-American brothers. We come with broken hearts because we are a pitiful people. In our hearts we still feel the pain and the shame of the past. Our people have been devastated, dishonored and destroyed. Ninety-seven percent of our land is gone. And saddest of all, twelve million of our people are gone from wars and disease. To this day many of our Native believers still struggle

with the pain of the past. Please, Oh God, give our Native-American Christians hearts that are filled with forgiveness and love for all men. May we have the courage and the grace to follow the example of our Lord Jesus, when He cried out from the cross, "Father, forgive them." Reconcile us today to one another. Set us free from the past. Give us victory for the now. For You, dear Lord, are our bright hope for tomorrow. In Jesus' name.

Bruce Fong again came forward to pray not for the racism of his people, but for forgiveness for their inactivity to right the wrongs of white society:

Almighty God, as an Asian-American, thank you for the bountiful blessings You've given to me, and to those like me who share a long and a rich culture. It is a joy and a blessing that we praise you for.

But in the pursuit of that, we've oftentimes, Lord, stood aloof and afar off when You, by Your grace, have brought us into Your Church, and we can see the tension of racial conflict among our brothers. And we stood, and we watched; we understood but we did not act.

And I pray, Father, that You'll allow me, and my Asian brothers who can identify with this, to confess our sin of inactivity—of not stepping in to show the love of Christ, and being more content to be comfortable with people like ourselves.

Fong came close to confessing racism, but his position is probably closer to the truth than a charge of racism would justify. It has been a matter of comfort when among one's own kind. But if whites feel uncomfortable among non-whites it's called racism. Yet whites feel tension from non-whites too. This doesn't mean they cannot accept or love one another as brethren in Christ; it just means that it is natural to feel more comfortable among those of like culture. Different races think differently about many things. In Christ, we must overcome the distinctions when it comes to the Faith, but we are not racists if we prefer a particular culture. Are the Native-American and Asian fellowships ready to give up their names that keep them distinct from the rest of the churches? Unless they do they will have been found guilty of lip service in these prayers.

Jesse Miranda also took the platform again, this time to pray. As did the others, he avoided any mention of racism on the part of his people, but, in his opening remarks in Spanish, reiterated the problem of white oppression.

Following Miranda, Rollye Kolbe, Promise Keepers Deaf Ministries Manager, prayed about how the deaf and other handicapped people are mistreated:

Our God, you see us deaf as we are. And we also say, forgive the hearing; they don't understand deaf culture; they don't understand our ways; they don't seem to accept us as we are, as You've made us.

But the deaf people forgive you. We've been angry, and we've been bitter. We ask for your forgiveness. We're all in the same family.

Rabbi Marty Waldman of Congregation Baruch Ha Shem in Dallas, Texas, also laid the charge of persecution and discrimina-

tion upon the white churches by reminding the Lord of the Crusades and the Inquisitions. Because of the pain he and his Jewish brothers have felt, they have kept themselves aloof from the churches. But now he desires unity and peace with his Gentile brothers in Christ.

Hayford introduced Dick Eastman who led the men in prayer on three fronts: 1) revival and awakening in our churches and cities; 2) intercession for the persecuted Church around the world; 3) involvement in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Silas Correa, pastor of Indian Bible Church of Denver, prayed for the raising up of ethnic leaders in the churches, and for generational curses to be broken.

Dr. Raleigh Washington, Promise Keepers Reconciliation Vice-president, took the platform to lament that, in spite of all the calls for reconciliation, "we have not joined hands." He then read a letter from a former member of the Ku Klux Klan, who now confesses Christ as his Savior, and has thrown off his racist ways.

Such a letter is a blessing in any setting. Every believer should rejoice that unbelievers repent of their sins, whether it be racism or any other sin. Of course, no man is guilty of only one sin; we are all guilty of many sins. It is only the blood of Christ that cleanses us from unrighteousness and puts us in right standing with God. But to hear Promise Keepers tell it, racism is a sin of white people; lack of response to racism, or reaction in hatred against racism is the sin of non-white people.

As we analyze the messages attendant to the racial reconciliation portion of the Washington D.C. gathering, we see that none of the non-white leaders was willing to admit that racism is as much a sin of their own ethnic heritage as it is of the white European heritage.

Racism is not a white sin; it is a human sin. It is a sin that plagues every race. This is evidenced by the racial wars even here in the United States between Latinos and blacks, between blacks and Asians, and between Asians and Latinos. By heaping the guilt of racism upon white Christians—most of whom had already been cleansed from their sins by faith in Christ Jesus—Promise Keepers has not resolved the racial problem; it has exacerbated it by cementing in the minds of non-white Christians the perception that the injustices they have suffered is the fault of all whites—Christian and non-Christian alike.

With every opportunity to confess their own racist hatred toward whites (whatever the cause), these leaders exhibited a smugness that excused them from the problem within their own hearts. Their implication that racism is a sin of white people, and their only sin is reaction against white racism, is itself racist. It indicates a self-righteousness that separates humanity into spiritual classes, with whites being spiritually inferior.

Now, lest I be accused of racism, the reader should know that I am Middle Eastern by descent, Lebanese in particular. Although my father was born in Syrian-occupied Lebanon he was raised in Mexico and had a strong Mexican acculturation. My identity throughout my life has been as an American with only a couple of Middle Eastern friendships. Raised a Roman Catholic in the inner-city of Los Angeles, most of my friends were Latino, Irish and black. Yet regardless with which culture we may identify ourselves, our pre-eminent concern must be with truth. And the

truth is that the hearts of non-white people are just as perverse as those of white people. This includes the perverseness of racism.

Promise Keepers has done an injustice to white believers by heaping upon them the sin of racism while making excuses for the racism of non-whites, calling it a “reaction” against white racism. In effect, this makes whites guilty of not only their own racism, but the racism of others.

While this may be expected of the globalist-oriented fascist media and government, it has no place in the Body of Christ. True racial reconciliation is a work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men who come to an end of themselves through faith in Jesus Christ. The sin of racism is dealt with no less than any other sin at the point of true spiritual conversion; there is no need to rehash it and lay it again upon the consciences of those who have been cleansed of it.

God does not judge us by our racial background; He judges us as individuals. It is an affront against the work of the Cross and the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit to lay a charge of “ethnic sin” against true believers in Christ. I’m sorry for those white brothers who recall their own former racism, but I resent their laying the guilt of their own sins upon me.

If anyone professing to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ harbors or justifies genuine hatred against any individual or race he is merely a Christian by name, but has not been regenerated in his spirit. In that case, Promise Keepers is dealing with unregenerate men, not with the true Body of Christ, by insisting upon racial reconciliation. The best that can be accomplished in that case is to bring them to Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse their hearts as they are taught about the need to repent of that sin. But the display of one-sided accusations of racism accomplishes nothing in either the heart of the redeemed or the unredeemed. It merely justifies the racism still festering in the hearts of those who refuse to recognize it in themselves.

The Promise Keeper messages also neglected the work of true believers in bringing the Gospel to non-white races. Yes, injustices were perpetrated by ungodly men in the process of colonization; but the Lord used that colonization to bring the Gospel. Were it not for the colonization, which was admittedly fueled by greed in many cases (and just a desire for a better life of freedom in most cases), the Gospel would not have been brought to this continent.

Rather than focus on the bad, why not rejoice in the good? When people curse the past they are cursing their own existence. Every event throughout history shapes the events of the future.

Where would Christians be today were it not for the injustice suffered by Jesus on the cross? In a more mundane vein, where would anyone be today were it not for the injustices their ancestors may have suffered? Where would they be had western European colonization not foisted itself upon their ancestors, causing the misery they lament?

At best we would be living in squalid conditions far worse than even the slums of America where, to people in other parts of the world, life would seem comfortable at least. But most likely we would never have been born!

We are all individual results of the unique union of our birth parents. They, and all in our lineage that preceded them, were likewise unique results of unique unions, all brought together by

the circumstances of life—whether happy or sad, just or unjust, righteous or unrighteous. The very life I live is a blessing ordained by God who used the circumstances of my parental lineage to bring me into existence. To curse the oppressive conditions that caused my ancestors to leave the Old Country and come to America would be to curse my very existence. For anyone to curse any injustices that led to their parent’s union at a specific time in a specific place that resulted in their birth is to curse their own existence.

We cannot really curse the past anyway. By harboring hatred for the past we curse our own future, destined to live lives of frustration, anger and bitterness.

Does this mean that I favor injustice? No. This does not justify injustices. But God is still sovereign over His creation, and nothing transpires without His knowledge and even His doing, even if man perceives it as “unjust.”

Perhaps it’s time that we all thanked God for the events of history that led to our existence instead of harboring hatred or, at best, resentment. More importantly, it’s time that all true believers thanked God for the Gospel reaching us no matter how we, or our ancestors, had to suffer injustice in the process!

The story of Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, demonstrates God’s sovereignty over not only our lives, but history.

We can understand a world without hope harboring feelings of resentment, and even hatred for past injustices. But such feelings have no place in the Body of Christ.

We can also understand pointing to those injustices of the past as a caution against repeating them in the future, or to warn us not to trust institutions or even individuals that have acted unrighteously without demonstrating legitimate repentance. But let’s not take the low road of victimization. Soon enough the Lord will judge all who practice injustice.

Of all the “ethnic” speakers that day, only David Castro of New Covenant Ministries called for abandonment of racial identity. He pointed to the work of Christ on the cross to make all believers one new man:

Hispanics want identity as who they are; blacks want identity as who they are; Native-American Indians want identity who they are; the Asians—everybody is looking for identity. And one of the beautiful things about the Body of Christ is that, in Christ Jesus, we are all one. There is no racial difference; there’s no Jew, there’s no Greek, there’s no male; there’s no female—we’re all the same in Christ Jesus.

And that’s one of the things that’s so beautiful about this gathering of Standing in the Gap—that we don’t come here because we’re representing a race, representing an ethnic background. We come here as Christians; we come here all as children of the same Father; all have been purchased by the same blood, saved and redeemed by Jesus Christ our Savior! He is our point of bonding together! He is the one that unites us! It’s in Christ Jesus that I can be the brother to my white brother, to my black brother, to my Asian brother! He’s my brother; I don’t look at him because of the color of his skin!

I guess that has helped me is to think how God sees me. In Christ Jesus God no longer sees the color of my

race; He doesn't see the color of my eyes or my hair, that kind of gives you an idea of what my cultural background is. In Christ Jesus, God sees me as one! The color He sees me is red, the blood of Jesus!

This is an excellent approach to the subject of race within the Body of Christ. Yet in spite of this excellent approach, the reality is that each representative of the various cultural and racial groups consistently identified their cultures within relationship to the dominant white culture. Over and over, they stressed their racial differences, cementing the fragmentation they claim to abhor.

THE TAKEOVER

Following the reconciliation portion of the program, Bill McCartney took the platform to stir the men into action, and to set the agenda for the churches into the twenty-first century:

Hallelujah! We're in that part of the program now, where we talk about an extraordinary hope. It's my privilege to cast a vision! We need a precise plan! Can't be a guy leave here [sic] without knowing exactly what we're going to be doing, so that the right hand will know what the left hand's doing. We have a plan!

Originally, many pastors and men became involved with Promise Keepers because of the encouragement that organization offered for the men to take the role of leadership in their homes, churches and communities. There was no idea given that Promise Keepers would actually mobilize not only the men, but the pastors and their churches, under a "plan." McCartney's proposal, as we will see, effectively places the churches under the direction of Promise Keepers to fulfill the Great Commission and achieve the goals of Promise Keepers in breaking down denominational and racial distinctions.

It is the local assembly's job to work, without oversight from others, to fulfill the Great Commission as the Lord guides it through the elders' leading. McCartney and Promise Keepers, however, had a plan to mobilize the churches under their leading:

Let's take inventory! Let's get one heartbeat! Who are we? Where are we going? And how are we going to get there? How can we take this multitude of men and multiply them to advance the Kingdom of God?

First of all, who are we? Positionally, we are seated with Christ in Heaven, amen? [A loud response from the men, "Amen!"]

Yet practically, we are still here on earth, but indwelt by God's Holy Spirit, amen? [Another loud "Amen!"]

Every guy here has God's Spirit in him. That's what knits us together; we have the same seed! We're going to spend all eternity together! [This, of course, is an assumption!] Well, when we get up there, we want to be able to testify that we did it together!

The third part of our identity, positionally, practically, and now we're partners. We are the Church! We're the Body of Christ! We're the brotherhood of believers! This is what we believe: if you, only through faith, trust in Christ alone for salvation, then you are saved from your sin, and born again by the Spirit of God! If you have faith

alone in Christ alone, then you are delivered from the fear of condemnation to the joy of peace with God!

But Roman Catholics, if they are faithful to their church, must believe that the mass, the sacraments and indulgences are the means to salvation, not to mention the need to remain under papal authority and in submission to the Roman Catholic Church's Magisterium (teaching authority). Yet McCartney melds all together under what normally would be a good qualifier for true faith in Christ. But then the good qualifier is reduced to a subjective claim to faith in Christ:

Here's who we are: we are Baptists; we are Pentecostals; we are Methodists; we are Lutherans; we are Roman Catholics; we are independents—anyone who names the name of Jesus, believes that Jesus Christ is the son of the Living God, loves Him with all his heart, and has received Him in Spirit—that's who we are! Do we agree on that?

This was followed by a loud shout of "Yes!" and prolonged applause. McCartney then set the course of direction for the churches:

And where are we going? The reason that there's momentum—and there's great optimism—is because we've been divided, and a house divided cannot stand! But now we're being reunited! And as we're reunited, we understand that this is unity with diversity! [There's a well-used New Age term!] This is diversity without dissension!

God is not a God of sameness; He is a God of oneness! Our destination is brotherhood in concert! True, biblical oneness! Ephesians 4:16 makes it real personal: "From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work!"

Here's where the Promise Keepers' plan for control of the men begins to reveal itself:

Every guy must do his part! Nobody can go out of here without the same plan! Colossians 3:1 and 2: "since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above—not on earthly things."

The change is, the Spirit of God has taken over dominion of our hearts, and our hearts and minds are being set on God when we leave out of here! We have to be hungry for more! We are not satisfied with what we receive here, because, "blessed are those who hunger and thirst"—they keep getting filled! So we stay hungry for God!

Here's where Promise Keepers' plan for control of the churches begins to reveal itself:

Now, how will we get to where we're going? Simply stated, it works like this: every man connected to a church; every church connected to each other. We propose that every man returns home and submits to the authority of a local shepherd—a pastor! Our clergy are called to lead us spiritually! We must let them lead; we are commanded by God to let them do so! Hebrews 13:17 is a clear mandate; it's not negotiable! Listen to God's Word:

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them, so that their work will be a joy and not a burden. For that will be of no advantage to you.”

Can no guy leave out of here [sic] as a Lone Ranger! Many guys have been traveling on their own vision! We want you to go back to your church and give away your time, your treasure and your talents! When we were born onto this earth we were born with God-given gifts, amen! [A loud shout of “Amen!” resounds.]

But when you’re born again, you’re born in the spiritual gifts! And the parable of the talents tells us that you can’t sit on those gifts; you can’t squander them; you’ve got to give them away! You’ve got to go to your local church, and you’ve got to say to your pastor, “How high, how far and how much!? You lead me! I put my faith in you as a leader!” We all gotta do that!

If one knows the Vineyard philosophy of control, one will easily spot the “clergy-laity” foundation for this command to “submit” to one’s pastor. In truth, however, we are commanded to submit only in spiritual matters that are in conformity to God’s Word. We are not commanded to submit in everything, especially where God’s Word either conflicts or has no say in the matter. While we must respect and honor those in authority within the assemblies we do not give our minds and bodies over to them unqualifiedly. Yet this is the impression given by McCartney and it is fully in line with the Vineyard shepherding model. In addition, there are no qualifiers offered for submission “to a pastor.” The pastors must answer to the brethren for their beliefs and practices. And, in fact, most pastors today are unqualified to lead God’s people. We cannot trust men beyond the degree to which they are in submission to God’s Word. And there are too many areas where the pastors—most notably in this case, Vineyard pastors—are teaching and practicing contrary to God’s Word. (See our special report, *The Vineyard: Its Doctrines and Practices*.)

McCartney continues:

Now pastors! You are our leaders! You’ve been working with half a squad! You’ve been working with mostly women! But that’s going to change. You have to be ready now! These guys are coming back; these guys want to be part of building a vibrant church! Is your church ready for these men to give away their gifts?

Envision with me, if you will, a church where the men go back, and the men give away everything that God has invested in them! So they’re praying in that church, and they’re very active in that church! They’re giving everything that God’s given them away! Now the pastor, we are asking you to connect with the other pastors in the community! We’re asking you to meet once a week—and not to compromise this! We’re asking you to come together in prayer with the other pastors in the community! And as you cry out to God and hear God’s heart for that community, we want you to share the burdens of the community!

Exactly what is God’s heart for any given community? His burden is for His people, not for the community, which will continue under Satan’s domain until the Lord returns. His burden

is for the lost in the community, true, but that goes without saying. By telling the pastors to share the burdens of the community, he is implying the need for social reform led by the churches.

Also, Promise Keepers is setting the agenda for the pastors and telling them not to compromise it. But who put Promise Keepers in authority over the churches?

True, McCartney is “asking” the pastors to do this. But as he continues we will see the demand behind the request, stated in terms that coerce with a guilt trip for those who do not comply:

And then, pastor, when you’ve heard the burden and the need, go back to your church, call your men together, and tell them about the needs in the community! And Almighty God will raise up just what we need to meet the needs in those communities!

What “needs” beyond the Gospel and works of love by every believer—which is already commanded in God’s Word—does McCartney expect the pastors to find? And who can tell what God will do? Job and his friends were chastised by God for daring to think they knew His mind. Beyond what He has revealed in His Word, we cannot know His mind. And all “needs” other than those revealed in His Word are subjective in men’s minds.

There are a lot of people who aren’t here today! And the reason they’re not here today is they think this is just a pep rally! They don’t realize the intentionality that we have! The word “justice” means, “see the need in others and respond to it!”

This isn’t exactly accurate, but we can accept McCartney’s subjective understanding in context of what he is attempting to accomplish.

Here’s what we’re going to do! [No more asking from here on; now he is telling.] We’re going to connect in such a way that we’re going to meet the needs of our communities!

Men, you’ve got to get excited about that! That’s when God’s going to move!

Who says? This is Promise Keepers’ vision, not God’s. God will move when and how He chooses to move. Is this a prophecy? Is it a guarantee? The subjective charismatic spirit is evident.

Not only that pastor, we need you preaching, teaching, living and modeling racial reconciliation and denominational reconciliation! There’s tremendous favor in your heart for all the Body of Christ! And so it breathes from your heart! We need every pastor to breathe that through the men!

“We need you?” Who put Promise Keepers in the position to tell the pastors what to teach, preach and practice? It’s one thing to say that these things should be done; it’s another to insist upon it so that Promise Keepers’ vision can be realized. And the demand for denominational reconciliation leaves no room for questioning the doctrines and practices of religious organizations whose “creedal statements” meet Promise Keepers’ criteria for acceptance. There can be no more questioning of Roman Catholicism, especially.

At this point McCartney reveals Promise Keepers' plans to teach the pastors how to catch the P.K. vision:

Promise Keepers is sponsoring nine pastors' conferences—they're one day—it's not overnight! It's in early January—early 1998 in January, February and March. It should show up on the overhead. These conferences will last one day; be sure that your pastors participate! The reason they have to come and we need them there is we need a unity of command! We need to have everybody on the same page!

Early on I warned certain pastors about Promise Keepers' design to control the churches. I was summarily rebuffed as not knowing what I was talking about. Now the plan comes to light.

Promise Keepers wants all the pastors on the same page. But whose page? Promise Keepers' page, of course. They need unity of command. But who is in command? Promise Keepers, of course. And what about those that don't come? Will they be out of God's will? Who is Promise Keepers to demand total loyalty and participation in their agenda?

The theme for these clergy conferences is "Building mighty men of God!" This will be a time of renewal for our pastors, but also a time for them to embrace their call to spiritually lead the men that God's going to bring to them—models of vibrant men's ministry will be presented, and pastors will be equipped to start effective men's ministry in their church! Many of our churches have it, but most do not have it.

"Our" pastors? What if the denominational leaders of some pastors object to this? To whose authority are the pastors to submit—their denominational heads or Promise Keepers? To suggest that Promise Keepers is going to be "building mighty men of God" is to say that Promise Keepers is going to make the pastors into the men of God that they should be. Again, Promise Keepers takes control over the churches by taking control of the pastors! And they will tell the pastors how to take and keep control of their men to fulfill Promise Keepers' agenda! The fact that the primary leadership of Promise Keepers was at the time in submission to John Wimber (now deceased), who has claimed to be the apostle to the churches in the last days, should give pause to pastors who are so blindly submitting themselves and God's men under their authority to the Promise Keepers agenda.

McCartney continues:

Models of churches in a community, connected together in vital prayer networks will be presented! Our pastors will be encouraged and equipped to bring their church and the community together through prayer and meeting the needs of the community!

Why is it necessary to bring the churches and the community together? The churches are to be autonomous, separated assemblies of believers to build one another up in Christ and to take the Gospel to the unsaved; they are not here to "meet the needs of the community" beyond that. This is a doctrine of the church growth movement authored by C. Peter Wagner and his protégé, John Wimber.

Lastly, racial and denominational reconciliation standards will be presented at these pastors' conferences in practical ways that we can live in unity in the Body of Christ, and together make a difference for the Kingdom!

Whose "standards" for racial and denominational reconciliation are the churches to accept? From what we've seen so far, Promise Keepers' standards aren't biblical. Their position on racial reconciliation is to blame the white man for all evils. And their position on denominational reconciliation effectively nullifies Reformation attempts to maintain purity of doctrine and practice in accordance with God's Word. No proselytizing of Roman Catholics will be allowed! No leading of Roman Catholics out of the errors foisted upon them by their church will be tolerated! What a clever way to polarize believers against preaching the Gospel where it is so desperately needed!

Now I want you to hear this: on January the first, on the year 2,000, we're calling for every church that names the name of Jesus Christ to gather at twelve o'clock noon on the state capitol—the steps in your geographical state—and we're asking every pastor to come with his men on that day. That day is twenty-seven months away—and we're asking the pastors to stand with their men and say before all of the other churches and pastors in that state, "Yes, we have vibrant men's ministry; we meet the needs of our men; our men are fully integrated and involved!"

What about men who do not agree with Promise Keepers' agenda? We've already been pushed aside. Promise Keepers has set the course for fellowship based on accepting their direction, and many pastors and individual men in the churches have been making those who disagree feel ostracized from the "accepted" group.

Secondly, "Yes, we have vital prayer partnership networking going throughout our community; we testify!"

And then, thirdly "they're going to stand and testify [They are? Is this a command?] that they are racially—racially—reconciled. They are going to be able to say, "Yes! We teach, preach, model and live racial reconciliation!" And when that happens, the Church of Jesus Christ is going to be able to stand up and say, "We can testify that the giant of racism is dead inside the Church of Jesus Christ!"

We're also asking you, pastor, to be able to testify, regardless of denomination, that you teach that we live together and love each other together as one across denominations!

What we are witnessing is a typical Vineyard takeover tactic. They get as many as possible to agree with those areas where they have a biblical basis to stand, as well as with emotional issues that appear on the surface to be of God. Then they take command and direct as many as they can get to follow them into their pre-planned course.

Now, Promise Keepers is shifting our strategy. We're going to take two years, and we're going to sweep this nation! Next year [1998] we're going to have eighteen stadium events and nineteen arena events! And these events

are going to change, because there's going to be no admission—no charge! We want you to bring the lost! We want you to bring the lukewarm! Almighty God's going to show up! He's going to grab them! Go out and get them! And bring them!

Again, McCartney tells us what God is going to do in response to Promise Keepers' efforts. If this is audacious it was certainly lost on the men in attendance, and certainly on McCartney and Promise Keepers.

In 1999 we're going to duplicate that in different places! And then, on January the first, the year 2,000, when the churches stand together and testify that the men are fully involved, and that everything's in order, Promise Keepers is going to turn and go globally [sic]. We're going to set all our efforts—do you know, there's nowhere in the world—nowhere—where men are standing strong for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! It's time! You guys gotta launch us and send us out there so God will use us, calling men together all over the world! [Applause.]

One must wonder how Promise Keepers is going to do in Roman Catholic countries. The tensions that exist due to persecution of Evangelical Christians in those countries will not be so easy to overcome. Christians in those countries know first-hand the evil face of Roman Catholicism. They will be coerced to either stop proselytizing Catholics (which has the Catholic Church upset and has resulted in the pope's call for resistance against them), or they will incur the disfavor not only of the papacy, but of Promise Keepers.

As a prelude to the offering and the reading of the D.C. Covenant, McCartney closed by saying he wanted to give the men a chance to say, "Count me in!"—to "wholeheartedly buy into what we believe in our hearts Almighty God has given the men of God in this nation to do."

Jack Hayford again took the platform to introduce James Robison, who would take an offering for Promise Keepers. In the process, Hayford cleverly put a guilt trip on the men:

Hey, listen! We're all so pumped right now, it's going to be tough to just focus. But you know what? There is right now the *action point* that may be the real test of each of our maturity [sic]. And it's something I believe every man here is going to want to do. As we take these next few minutes, I want you to join me in a prayer for openness to receive what James Robison, Dale Schlafer and Billy Graham are going to bring us—each briefly, but each significantly. Would you pray a prayer with me brothers—all of us together—just say with me, will you, after me, "Dear God, help my ears to hear and my heart to obey; help me catch this moment of commitment and covenant—covenant with You to be the man you called me to be—commitment in faith. It's at hand right now; Lord, I don't want to miss it." Everybody say, "In Jesus' name."

How can anyone ask men to pray that God will give them ears to hear, and, especially, a *heart to obey* a covenant before they hear the terms of that covenant? This is a clever psychological ploy to put the men in the frame of mind to accept that their

"leaders" are leading them properly. And it also is designed to open their wallets to the "cause."

Robison, as he does so well, gave an impassioned plea for the men to be generous and sacrificial in their giving to Promise Keepers. He reminded them of all that Promise Keepers has done without charge that day, and the work that lies ahead. The guilt trip, of course, was employed with skill:

Now listen closely. All day long you've said to God, "I love You!" A few moments ago you said, "God, we love you." But Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is."

After having led the men to say these things, Promise Keepers uses it to coerce money out of them. Some might not see the ungodliness in such a ploy, but it's there in full bloom. No one should be coerced. And no one should coerce with appeals to one's faith. Let the need be known and leave it at that. If God wishes to bless it (or if Satan wishes to bless it), the necessary money will come in.

The Apostle Paul set the example for giving:

But this I say: he who plants sparingly shall also reap sparingly, and he who plants bountifully shall also reap bountifully. Every man according as he determines in his heart, so let him give—not grudgingly, or of compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Yes, it's alright to remind the brethren that generosity will reap its own reward, but that should not be the reason for giving. Just let each person purpose in his own heart what to give, and then trust God for the outcome.

Leading the men to open the Bibles they were given, which contained two envelopes for gifts to Promise Keepers, Robison "prophesied" to the men: "What is God telling you to do?"

He then told the men what to do. He wanted to see the greatest gift ever given, and he wanted the men to pledge to support Promise Keepers with a monthly gift.

I want to ask you right now to ask God what you should give here in the Mall! And I want you to give the greatest gift you've ever given in your life! God will lead you! Would you bow your head right where you stand and ask God to direct you in what He wants you to give? Just ask Him!

Why bother to ask God? Robison already told them he wants them to give the greatest gift they have ever given in their lives. But what if God doesn't want at least some of them to give that much?

The confusion is obvious to one who will listen and not just allow himself to be manipulated. But when it comes to hawking for money, today's Christian leaders are masters. And even at this point, Robison didn't stop speaking; he continued by reiterating over and over again how the men must give generously. After several minutes he still had not gotten to the point. At one stage of his appeal he said:

I want every single person here, under the leadership of God—every person—to make a gift!

Robison is presuming that God is leading "every person" to give. But what if God isn't leading every person to make a gift?

Had I been there I would not have given a gift. Nor would many I know have given a gift. Would we be disobeying God by disobeying Robison?

Robison continued for yet several more minutes, urging the men to give.

At that point I switched from C-Span to TBN. Paul Crouch had interrupted Robison's appeal to make an appeal of his own for funds, reminding the viewers of TBN's generosity in carrying the rally free of charge. After listening to Crouch's appeal I turned back to C-Span only to find Robison still appealing for money. Finally, he told the men where to hand their gifts in.

THE COVENANT

To close out the festivities, Dale Schlafer came forward to read the Promise Keepers' "D.C. Covenant" which took the form of prayer:

Our great and awesome God and Father, in Your sovereignty You have brought us to Washington, D.C., in the name of Your only Son, Jesus Christ. You have met us and dealt with us in powerful ways. You have been faithful with all of Your promises and loving in all Your ways. We now stand before You broken and humbled, called and strengthened by Your Holy Spirit to enter into this covenant with You.

If, in fact, they have been "called and strengthened" by the Holy Spirit, the D.C. Covenant is not of Promise Keepers, but of God. In that case, it is a New Covenant that God is instituting with His people. If, on the other hand, it is authored by Promise Keepers, the question arises as to the authority they have to implement a covenant with God. Individuals may covenant with God according to their desire to pledge or make a vow to Him with the understanding that they will be held to that pledge or vow. But nowhere in Scripture is any new covenant provided for a vast assemblage of men to which they are even encouraged to agree.

We covenant by Your grace to serve no other gods beside You. Where we have strayed from You, we commit to love You with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. Where we have grown distant in our communion with You, we commit to pursue and keep a relationship with you through worship, prayer and Your written Word, empowered by Your Holy Spirit.

What if the Holy Spirit is not in this covenant? It is then a fleshly attempt to conform to the Promise Keepers' agenda, as we shall find it to be.

We covenant, by Your grace, to become men of integrity, relying on Your Word and Christ in us. When faced with moral, ethical and sexual temptations we commit to ask You for help that we might do the right thing.

The help God gives is to convict us in our spirits when we are doing wrong. He does not *make* us do the right thing; He merely tells us what is right by His written Word. Knowing what is right, we must submit our wills to His will and *choose* to live godly.

We covenant by Your grace to love and serve our wives and children. We commit to give them first priority in

our prayers and schedules. Today, each of us declares, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Where we have used our masculinity against others, we now commit to honor all women and value all human life through our words and in our actions.

We covenant, by Your grace, to actively support the mission of our churches. Where we have criticized our pastors, and withheld our support, we commit to follow their spiritual leadership and to pray for them daily.

Where we have withheld our gifts, we commit to invest our time, treasure and talents into our churches.

What if the pastors lead God's flock into spiritual error? "Spiritual leadership" is not qualified here. Are Roman Catholics never to separate themselves from the spiritual leadership of their priests? Are Mormons never to challenge the ungodly teachings of their leaders? If they agree with this covenant then that would be the case. And if we find ourselves in serious disagreement based on God's Word as to the direction the church is taking, are we to continue investing our gifts?

We covenant, by Your grace, to pray for and to facilitate unity in the Body of Christ. Where our pride, insensitivities and prejudice have divided the Church, we commit to seek forgiveness, understanding and reconciliation.

To agree with this portion of the covenant would require ex-Roman Catholics to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with the papacy. That is the only way the Roman Catholic Church will accept us back! To not seek that forgiveness and reconciliation would be to break the P.K. covenant with God.

Where we have done little to confront the sins of sectarianism and racism, we commit to intentionally love the brotherhood of believers, and be an observable example of unity in Christ, that He might be exalted and known as the Son of God.

Two problems: 1) sectarianism is defined as a sin. Considering Promise Keepers' position on Roman Catholicism, then the Reformation was a sin because it created a sectarianism that exists to this day. If that sin is to be repented of, then all Protestants **must** seek forgiveness from the papacy and become Roman Catholics. Promise Keepers might call this a misunderstanding of their position, but a covenant is a covenant. *Words have meaning.* And careless words cause untold misery from the guilt of sin that, otherwise would not be a sin. The legalism of this covenant becomes more apparent, and is mind boggling! 2) to "intentionally...be an observable example of unity in Christ," as defined by the ecumenical agenda of Promise Keepers also would require that all ex-Catholics and Protestants return to the papacy. That is the only logical conclusion.

We covenant, by Your grace, to pursue vital relationships with a few other godly men for the purpose of encouraging one another toward love and good deeds.

We covenant, by your grace, to be witnesses in word and deed to the love, forgiveness and hope that You have given us through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Grant us the gift of Your empowering Holy Spirit today, and each day from hereafter, that Jesus Christ may be seen and exalted in our lives.

Now, with this Covenant, we go forth in a Spirit of unity in Christ Jesus, poised for revival in our churches, and spiritual awakening in our land. For whether we live or die, we belong to You.

It is audacious to think that men can initiate a covenant with God in the first place. Who gave Promise Keepers the right to do such a thing, and to hold so many men accountable to it? The pastors who send their men to Promise Keepers and/or who tout Promise Keepers' virtues are leading their flocks into spiritual error. They have taken the strong confession of faith in Jesus as evidence that all that Promise Keepers offers must be of God.

CONCLUSION

The spiritual agenda of Promise Keepers is not new. It has been lifted from the philosophies of various dominionist groups that believe they can, through ritual, confession of racial and generational sins, and demonstrations of unity, invite or allow God to take dominion over the nations. This, they see, as a means to usher in "righteousness." The agenda is based upon dominion theology. (See my book, *Vengeance Is Ours: The Church In Dominion*, Sword Publishers.)

We do not accuse of ulterior motives all who belong to Promise Keepers. There were a lot of godly men present that day—men whose hearts are contrite, and whose intentions to serve God are pure. But when we see how they are being misled by a good-sounding presentation by professional clergymen, our heart breaks for them.

Some may think this writing to be fault-finding for no good reason. The good, they would say, outweighs the bad. But our purpose is not to find fault, it is to help our brethren THINK!

If someone gets involved with Promise Keepers, that's between them and God. But it pains me to see so many men, like little bobbing dolls on the back dash of someone's car, nodding to everything they are told, just because it came in the name of Jesus, and some sound teaching accompanied it.

To them I would say, use your heads! Understand what Promise Keepers is asking you to commit to. Study the words and reason out what they will mean to you in your walk with Christ and in your religious associations. All of these words have meaning. Nothing was stated without purposeful, premeditated design. Even most of the prayers were read from papers.

You are in the hands of those you trust. Do you trust them because they have a good reputation, or because they're nice guys with humble attitudes and they say a lot of biblically-sound things?

The leaders of Promise Keepers have been clever. From the beginning they have pumped up the pastors, knowing that if they can get pastors on their side they can get the men they need to implement their agenda. The pastors who have endorsed Promise Keepers and have led the men of their congregations to follow that organization have loved the flattery of men more than they have loved the truth. And they have followed Promise Keepers blindly. Some would follow them to Gehenna even if they saw the flames waxing before them.

Do not follow them, even if you have trusted them from the time of your conversion—even, in fact, if they were the instrument through which God effected your conversion.

Follow no men beyond the boundaries of sound scriptural doctrine. Many will use sound doctrine to earn your trust so they can lead you in the direction they wish you to go, or so they can cause you to believe a lie that will nullify the truths you hold.

That said, we recognize that many of the leaders of Promise Keepers are sincere in their beliefs. But sincerity doesn't always equate to trustworthiness. The leaders of most cults and false religions are sincere in their beliefs. But they are leading their followers into spiritual destruction.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the path to death. (Proverbs 16:25)

Promise Keepers may not be leading men to death, but its philosophy is destructive to the intent that God has for men. His desire is not merely that men take the lead in order to please their wives and children; His desire is that men lead in guiding their families in His will. This often means conflict between a husband and wife, or a father and his children. It is up to biblically qualified teachers in the local assemblies to expound on God's Word in order to help men understand what God is saying to them. It is not up to any other institution to take on that task.

I fully realize how difficult it is to receive a warning like this. But are you willing to examine what is said and test it by the Scriptures? If so, you will be a good workman in the Kingdom of God. If not, you will be duped into following religious leaders into an agenda designed by a professional clergy who care more for their ecumenical unity than they do for you.

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also are transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

Brethren, be on guard, for Satan is walking about, seeking whom he may devour. ❖

For additional information see Media Spotlight's other special reports on Promise Keepers: *Promise Keepers: Is What You See What You Get?* and *Promise Keepers: Taking Over the Churches*.

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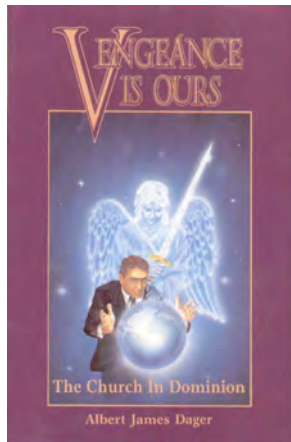
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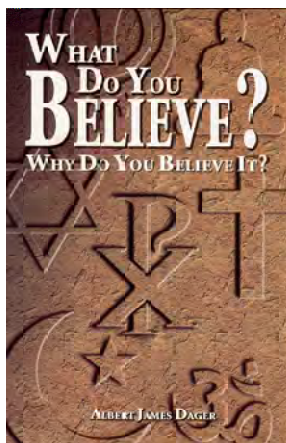
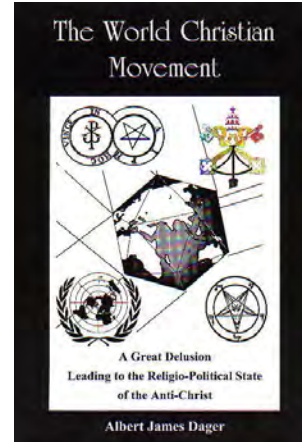


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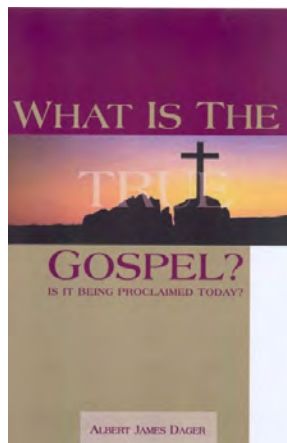
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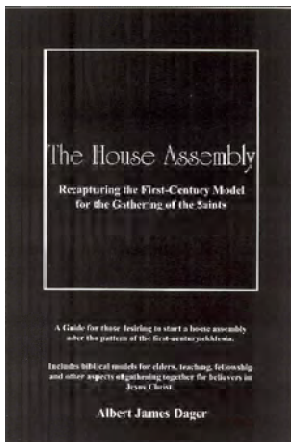
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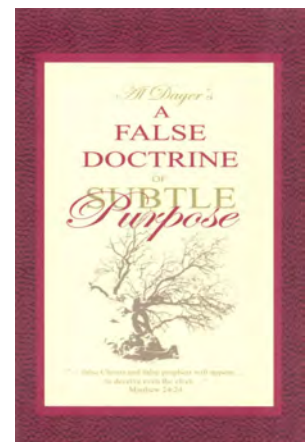
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