

But Are the Testimonies?

By Albert James Dager

curiosity at the currently popular account of Colton Burpo's alleged visitation to Heaven as he lay on the operating table undergoing emergency surgery to repair internal organs severely poisoned by a burst appendix. As I watched the movie based on his account, and then read the book on which the movie is based, I couldn't escape a nagging feeling that something didn't seem entirely right about such an inspiring story of an average four-year-old boy's remarkable telling of having been in the presence of Jesus, John the Baptist, his stillborn sister, his great-grandfather, and even "God" Himself. His depictions of Heaven and conversations with these persons seem to ring true. Yet in some cases they seem so fantastic as to beg credulity. Yet it must not be dismissed out of hand simply because one doesn't trust such testimonies.

The movie is at times a tear-jerker, at times a comedy, but always an attention grabber.

Not quite four years old at the time of his operation, Colton recovered against tremendous odds of survival. His distraught parents, Todd and Sonja Burpo, agonized over his ordeal under the surgeon's knife. While Sonja was on the phone calling friends and family to pray for Colton, Todd, the pastor of Crossroads Wesleyan Church in Imperial, Nebraska, was alone in a room at the hospital angrily confronting God. After having suffered several medical issues over the past couple of years, Todd Burpo had had enough. According to his book, "Tears of rage flooded my eyes, spilled onto my cheeks. 'After the leg, the kidney stones, the lumpectomy, this is how you're going to let me celebrate the end of my time of testing?' I yelled at God. 'You're going to take my son!'"

In the movie, however, Todd is seen in the hospital chapel. His final words are, "You're not taking my son!"

Needless to say, Todd repented of his rage against God, confessing his sin to his congregation. But that was the outcome of Colton's miraculous recovery. No one—I'd dare say not even Todd Burpo—knows if his faith would have remained intact had Colton died that day.

But Colton didn't die, and now his story of his heavenly encounters have made the status of #1 *New York Times* Bestseller with over 8 million copies sold. It has received mixed reviews—raves by conservative and Christian reviewers, and less-than-enthusiastic responses by more secular and liberal reviewers. This is to be expected, of course.

As usual, I don't care so much about how the message is told, as much as I care about the message itself. And there is little fault to be found with any message that insists "Heaven is for real."

But we have to take into consideration that his story (published in 2010) is not told by Colton (now 15), but by his father, Todd. As such, it is a third-party account. In a court of law it would be discounted as "hear-say" rather than viable evidence for establishing truth.

Even so, there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Todd Burpo who, by all accounts, is an honest and dedicated pastor of a small church in a tiny rural Nebraska town. Both his book and the movie present the Gospel by weaving Scripture into the story. Little Colton's experiences are compared with Scripture. Where there is no supporting biblical evidence, the Burpos rely on faith. As Sonja asked at one point, "Why can't it just be a mystery?"

The movie, co-produced by mega-church "bishop," T.D. Jakes, takes liberties with some of the events described in the book. In the movie, Colton, emboldened by his experience, goes to another little boy who seems on the verge of death in the hospital, takes his hand, and tells him that everything is going to be okay. According to Todd's account in the book, it wasn't a young boy, but an old man who was on his deathbed.

In the book, Todd found a small room in which to pray and eventually rage against God; in the movie he went into a chapel at the hospital.

In the book, Colton describes people in Heaven dressed in white robes with colored sashes; in the movie people are dressed in Western civilian clothes. Jesus, who Colton tells us in the

(Continued on page 3)

MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

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WHY MEDIA SPOTLIGHT?

Media Spotlight is a ministry to the Body of Christ, bringing understanding of the ways in which the world shapes our thinking and lifestyles through the influence of the mass communications media.

God's Word exhorts, "buy the truth and do not sell it" (Prov. 23:23). Therefore we do not sell *Media Spotlight*. Begun in 1977, *Media Spotlight* was the first ministry on a national scale to address the ungodly nature of the secular media—motion pictures, television, toys, games and myriad other things that contribute to Christians living no differently than the rest of the world.

The mass media have impacted the Body of Christ as much as they have society. Many Christians are so dependent upon the media that they aren't aware of how lukewarm they have become. We have many testimonials from readers who tell us that, because of *Media Spotlight*, they have become aware of the effect the media have on their thinking, and are now more selective in their choices.

But the problem of ungodliness is not exclusive to the secular media. Of major concern are the religious media that present messages contrary to God's Word. *Media Spotlight* addresses the impact that religious teachers have upon believers in Christ, whether for good or for evil.

It has escaped the understanding of many Christians that what they believe is more often shaped by the teachings and traditions of religious men and institutions than by Scripture. Most teachers in the institutional churches rely more upon their theological disciplines than on the pure Word of God. Yet the wisdom of the world is no substitute for God's Word, even if offered from the pulpit or in the Christian media.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:24 that in the last days false christs and false prophets would arise and would show great signs and wonders, "so that, if possible, they will deceive the very elect." He also states in Matthew 24:12 that in the last days the love of many toward Him would grow cold because evil would increase in the world. If we believe Him, then we would be foolish not to guard ourselves against deception. There is little time to waste in the short span of life granted us by God. We must choose today whom we will serve. **MS**

Scripture quotations in *Media Spotlight* are from the King James Version of the Bible, rephrased in modern U.S. English unless otherwise stated.



A Personal Note

Dear Friends,

It seems we were a bit premature in rejoicing over the sale of our house. Although we had received early word from the lender that the buyer was pre-approved, and we signed the documents on Tuesday, March 18, with an expected closing date of Friday, March 21, we learned that the loan was not approved because the funds for the down payment had

not been "seasoned"—they were not held in one place for at least 60 days. So we put the house back on the market and were able to sell it, but for a lot less than we had sold it for prior. But having moved with the assurance that the previous sale would be closed on time, we had no choice but to lower our price for a quick sale. We just couldn't afford to keep paying the mortgage plus rent here.

In the meantime, we found a nice, smaller house here in Sequim for quite a bit below market value due to the sellers' need to move out of state. And although we lost a good sum on the reselling of our former house, the Lord provided a very nice house for much more under market than we lost. Had the first sale gone through, we wouldn't have come out as well overall.

This issue has reviews of two of the more popular "faith-based" movies inspired by best selling books. There has been a spate of such "faith-based" movies of late, with others in the works. One such, a not-so-funny comedy titled *Mom's Night Out*, is based on the hectic life of a housewife who can't control her kids. Her life is a constant frenzy, and her attempt to escape for one evening with two of her female friends, including her pastor's wife, turns into just another disaster. The movie has a few (very few) truly funny moments, and it's difficult to see how it can be classified as "faith-based" except for a couple of scenes where we receive the message that "Jesus loves you no matter what you do, or who you are."

The nominal new-gospel message of God's unconditional love is sweetly communicated to assure audience members that they're all okay where they are.

One wonders what "faith" is really being communicated in these "faith-based" movies. One to be released soon is based on the true exploits of the football team at De La Salle High School in Concord, California, a Catholic school that had an extraordinary 151-0 record spanning from 1992 to 2004. In this "faith-based" movie, the faith represented is Roman Catholicism.

This new genre of movies is an attempt by religious people to offset the ungodliness of the movie industry's normal fare. In that, they can't be faulted. They are generally family-oriented morality plays on screen. But in most cases they are preaching to the choir, finding their financial success in huge initial attendances stimulated by marketing to churches. It has been evident in our attendance at such movies that the audiences are mostly made up of Christians.

There is another agenda that accompanies some of these films, as we mention in our review of *God's Not Dead*.

It's not to say these movies have no merit; some provide good entertainment without having to endure the garbage that most of Hollywood produces today. But have no illusions; the film industry belongs to Satan, and it always will.

As always, we thank those of you who continue to support us with your prayers and gifts. And we pray for all our readers.

In Jesus' love,

Al and Jean
Al and Jean



(Continued from page 1)

book wore a white robe with a blue sash, is seen in the movie wearing white ancient Jewish garb with a brown belt.

The book states that people in Heaven have wings and halos, whereas only the angels have wings in the movie.

One scene that is in the movie, but not in the book, involves Carrie who is taunted by two boys who make fun of

Colton's experience. Carrie's response is to punch them both in the nose, knocking them to the ground. When Todd finds out about it, he reminds Carrie about "turning the other cheek, to which she replies, "I turned their other cheeks."

This evoked laughter from the "Christians" in the audience, but I found it disturbing. Especially when Colton says to his dad, "Pretty cool what Carrie did today, huh?" And Todd replies, "Yeah, pretty cool."

The timeline of the movie is not quite in line with the book on a few occasions, and the dialogue is different in several places. I suppose that can be chalked up to artistic license, but when telling true stories I believe those stories should be one hundred percent truthful, particularly when the story is designed to honor the Lord. Otherwise, how do we know what is true and what isn't true?

Still, the overall telling of little Colton's account between the book and the movie is pretty cohesive. Yet the question still remains, is it true?

When it comes to personal experiences of a spiritual nature, the first thing to remember is that those experiences are personal. No one is required to accept them as truth or even factual. Just because someone claims to have experienced something doesn't mean they did. They may truly believe they had the experience, but people of varying beliefs have reported many experiences unique to their belief systems, often contradictory of other people's experiences. This is true about many who claim to have been to Heaven.

The unique thing about Colton Burpo's out-of-body experience is that, unlike the others, he did not actually die clinically. His heart never stopped, and his brainwaves remained active during the time he said he left his body.

It would be highly unlikely that a four-year-old would be capable of making up such a story of leaving his body and seeing his parents in other parts of the hospital. But that's just what we are told Colton relayed to his father. He saw his father praying in one part of the hospital and his mother on the phone in another part.

Out-of-body experiences can be genuinely experienced, and not just through occult practices. People—even Christians—have been known to leave their bodies then come back and tell of such an experience. Some even claim to have been taken to Heaven and/or "Hell" (I assume they mean the place in Hades where the unrighteous await the final resurrection).

In Colton Burpo's case, there are things we are told he spoke of that he could not have known because he had never been told of them. The most striking testimony is that he met his still-born sister who didn't have a name because the Burpo's didn't know if she was a boy or a girl. She died at two months in the womb. When Colton told his parents of having met her they were stunned.

Is it possible that Colton somehow heard of his stillborn sister from his older living sister Cassie, then subconsciously brought her into his own mind during a vivid dream? The Burpos would say no.

Colton said that Jesus spoke with him as he sat on His lap, that Jesus rode a rainbow-colored horse, and that Colton sat next to the Holy Spirit in front of God's throne, with Jesus sitting on the right side of His "Dad."

Impossible? Who's to say for certain?

Is there any biblical precedent for such an experience? The apostle John tells of being taken to Heaven where He sees Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. But beyond that, no. But, again, one person's personal experience is between him and God; unless it is totally unbiblical, the worst we can classify it is extra-biblical. One may believe it or not believe it, but no one can prove it to be true. We're certainly not bound to it as a new revelation from God.

Scripture doesn't say anything about a rainbow-colored horse, but we know there are horses in Heaven, and that Jesus is seen riding on a white horse (Revelation 19:11). I can't imagine how a horse could be colored like a rainbow, but with God anything is possible.

Another extra-biblical, and unlikely detail of Colton's experience is that everybody in Heaven has wings except Jesus. The Father's wings are much larger than anyone else's, and He himself is larger than anyone else.

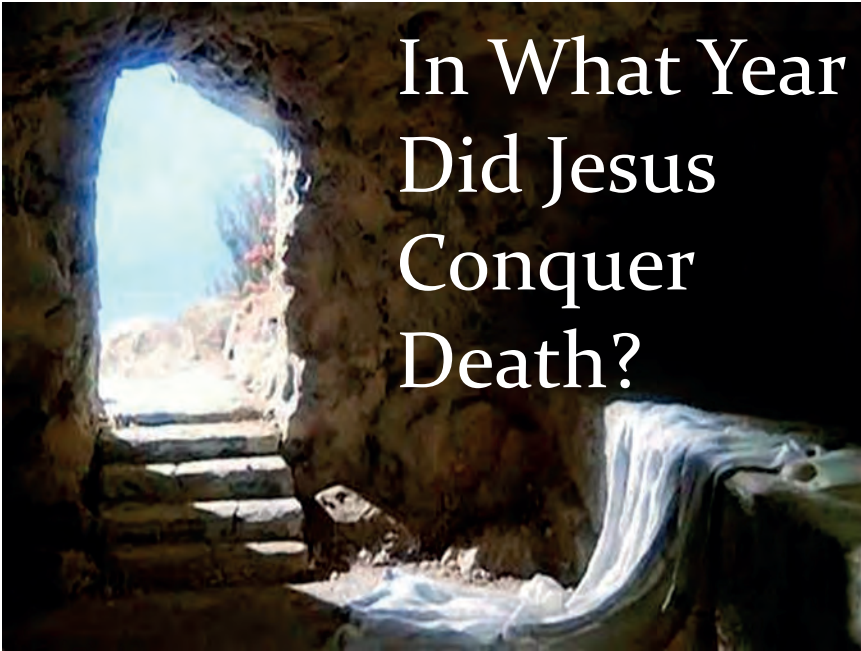
The only mention of wings on any intelligent creature in Heaven are those on the cherubim. But the cherubim seem to be unique to heavenly creatures. In every instance where Scripture relates that angels have appeared to men, they looked exactly like men. Other than the cherubim seen by Ezekiel, no other angels are said to have wings. And there is no mention of wings on humans in Heaven.

This is where we have to ask some hard questions. Are there humans in Heaven? The resurrection has not yet occurred, so how can that be?

Many true believers doubt that after death the saints are taken to Heaven. They believe their conscious souls are in the compartment of Hades where the righteous are kept until the resurrection. Even though Paul tells us that to be absent from the body is to be present with Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8), they would dispute that it means they are taken to Heaven. Rather, they would say, Christ is with them in that compartment of Hades.

Personally, I believe the spirits and souls of the saints do go to Heaven after death for two reasons: 1) Jesus in His resurrected body is at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. This doesn't mean He never moves about, but nothing in Scripture hints at His being in Hades at any time after His resurrection; 2) it would not

(Continued on page 6)



In What Year Did Jesus Conquer Death?

IS IT EVEN POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE?

SUPPLEMENT TO *FACTS & FALLACIES OF THE RESURRECTION*

By Albert James Dager

Sunrise in Jerusalem (31° 46' N, 35° 12' E) around Nisan 14 (Passover Day), in Jesus' time was approximately 6:00 AM; Sunset was approximately 6:30 PM.

Sunset on Wednesday, April 25, A.D. 31 would have been at 18:31 hours (6:31 PM). (See Chart A: "Twilight Times for the Possible Eclipses," below.)

Jesus died around the ninth hour (nine hours after sunrise) – 3:00 PM:

And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in the middle.

And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit."

And having said this, He gave up the spirit.

Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

And all the people that came together to that sight, seeing the things that were done, struck their breasts, and returned.

And all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood far off, looking at these things.

And, look, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor, and he was a good and a just man. (The same had not consented to the council and their actions.) He was from Arimathaea, a city of the Jews, who also himself waited for the Kingdom of God.

AS PASSOVER THIS year was approaching, I awoke around 3:30 AM one night, and as I pondered on my writing, *Facts & Fallacies of the Resurrection*, thoughts came into my head whether there is any viable evidence as to the year the Lord may have been crucified. When I researched *Facts & Fallacies* from 1980 to 1984, the year it was published, the Internet wasn't available. But now, I could more easily search for data that would tell me the days on which Passover fell in each of the previous 2,000 years. Having concluded that Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday according to the Julian (now Gregorian) calendar, I wanted to test that conclusion. I found that Passover Day fell on a Wednesday during AD 28 and AD 31.

The following is a summary of this most recent research. Keep in mind that the Hebrew calendar is a lunar calendar with two evenings: sunset beginning the day, and sunset ending the day. The month Nisan (also called Abib) is the first month of the Hebrew calendar. Passover Day is the 14th day of Nisan, regardless of the day on which it falls. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is Nisan 15, a Sabbath day, regardless of the day on which it falls. If Nisan 15 falls on any day other than the seventh day (the weekly Sabbath), there would be two Sabbath days for that week.

CHART A

Three Lunar eclipses were visible in Judea during March and April between 26 AD and 36 AD
A Time Zone offset of 2h 20m is applied reflecting the longitude of Jerusalem.

Wednesday 25 April 31 AD	20:02 to 26th/00:32
Friday 3 April 33 AD	18:17 to 19:42
Tuesday 23 March 34 AD	18:09 to 18:44
(For 33 AD and 34 AD, the starting time is Moonrise.)	

Twilight Times for the Possible Eclipses

Date	Sunset	Civil	Nautical	Astronomical
25 April 31 AD	18:31	18:56	19:26	19:58

http://navsoft.com/html/death_of_jesus.html,

This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. And He took it down and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein no man was ever laid before.

And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath began. (Luke 27:44-54)

A TIMELINE FOR JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

- Nisan 14 – Jesus is crucified; He is buried prior to sunset;
- Nisan 15 – the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15-20; a “high day” – John 19:31, a Sabbath Day);
- Nisan 16 – the women bought and prepared the spices;
- Nisan 17 – the weekly Sabbath; Jesus rises prior to sunset;
- Nisan 18 – the first day of the week (the Feast of First Fruits); Jesus presents Himself to the Father.

Scholars and historians can do no better than estimate the year of our Lord's birth, which ranges from 7 B.C. To A.D. 3, most likely A.D. 2. It is assumed that He was around 30 years old when He began His ministry, which lasted for two or three years. This would place the year of His crucifixion between A.D. 26 and A.D. 36, most likely in the middle. For Him to be seen on the first day of the week when the women came to the tomb, He would have to have been crucified on our Wednesday.

There were two years in which Nisan 14 fell on our Wednesday during the possible time of Jesus' crucifixion: A.D. 28 & A.D. 31 (see Chart B, below):

So for Jesus to have been in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40), and be seen by His disciples on the first day of the week (our Sunday), He would have to have been crucified on our Wednesday, April 28, A.D. 28, or (most probably) Wednesday, April 25, A.D. 31.

Attempts have been made to establish the exact date of the Lord's crucifixion by searching out times for solar eclipses, because of the assumption that the darkness that occurred as He died was a solar eclipse. There was no solar eclipse recorded on any of these dates, and there are no conclusive results. But the darkness could not have been the result of a solar eclipse because the darkness lasted for three hours—from the sixth hour to the ninth hour—which is much longer than the eight-minute upper limit for any solar eclipse's totality. It had to have been a supernatural event.

CONCLUSION

The Hebrew calendar (God's calendar) is a lunar calendar. The day begins at sunset and ends at the next sunset. The Gregorian calendar (today's secular calendar) is a solar calendar that reckons each day from midnight to midnight.

For Jesus to have risen on a Sunday (especially around sunrise according to Christian [Roman Catholic] tradition), He would have been in the tomb for three days and four nights.

According to Jesus' prophesy that He would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights, it is impossible for Him to have risen on a Sunday because He would then have had to be in the heart of the earth for three days and four nights.

Even if He rose sometime after sunset on Nisan 17, it would not be Sunday; it would be the beginning of the first day of the week according to the Hebrew calendar, which was still our Saturday.

It is assumed by some Sunday traditionalists that Jesus would have risen on the Feast of First Fruits because He was the First Fruits of the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Feast of First Fruits was observed on the first day of the week that occurred after the Passover. In this case, it would have been after sundown Sabbath (Nisan 17) until sundown the first day of the week (Nisan 18). But it would still be our Saturday, not our Sunday.

And the first day of the Feast of First Fruits was not the day of the harvest; it was the day the offering was presented to Yahweh.

In Jesus' case, it was not the day He rose, but the day He ascended to the Father to present Himself as the First Fruits of the Resurrection. This is why He told Mary, “Do not touch Me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father” (John 20:18).

Jesus died around 3:00 PM, thus beginning the time He would be “in the heart of the earth” (not in the grave, but in Hades).

Jesus was crucified on our Wednesday (Passover Day, Nisan 14) in the year A.D. 31. He died at 3:00 PM (the ninth hour). He was placed in the tomb between 3:30 PM and 6:30 PM.

Three days and three nights later, He would have risen sometime between 3:00 PM and 6:30 PM on Nisan 17 (the weekly Sabbath; our Saturday). Three days and three nights, as He prophesied!❖

CHART B

Year	Vernal Equinox	Astronomical New Moon Conjunction	First evening of visible crescent	Date of the first of Nisan	14 th day of Nisan (Passover)
26 A.D.	Fri. Mar. 22, 0*	Sat. Apr. 6, 7 a.m.	Sun. Apr. 7	Mon. Apr. 8	Sun. Apr. 21
27 A.D.	Sun. Mar. 23, 6 a.m.	Wed. Mar. 26, 7 p.m.**	Fri. Mar. 28	Sat. Mar. 29	Fri. Apr. 11
28 A.D.	Mon. Mar. 22, noon	Tues. Apr. 13, 2 p.m.	Wed. Apr. 14	Thurs. Apr. 15	Wed. Apr. 28
29 A.D.	Tues. Mar. 22, 6 p..	Sat. Apr. 2, 7 p.m.**	Mon. Apr. 4	Tues. Apr. 5	Mon. Apr. 18
30 A.D.	Wed. Mar. 22, 0*	Wed. Mar. 22, 8 p.m.	Fri. Mar. 24	Sat. Mar. 25	Fri. Apr. 7
31 A.D.	Fri. Mar. 23, 5 a.m.	Tues. Apr. 10, 2 p.m.	Wed. Apr. 11	Thurs. Apr. 12	Wed. Apr. 25

* Midnight at the end of the given day.

** Conjunction occurs too late in the day for crescent to be seen from Jerusalem the next evening.

(From http://judaismvschristianity.com/Passover_dates.htm)



(Continued from page 3)

be such a blessing to be separated from the Father in Hades, as Paul also tells us that it would be far better to be with the Lord than remain on earth even to continue in ministry (Philippians 1:23).

As far as saints in their bodies in Heaven, there are those who rose with Jesus in the first resurrection:

When He had cried again with a loud voice, Jesus yielded up the spirit.

And, look! The veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom, and the earth quaked, and the rocks split. And after His resurrection the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who slept arose, and came out of the graves, and went into the holy city, and appeared to many. (Matthew 27:50-53)

Some question this, suggesting that those saints were raised in the same manner that Jesus raised Lazarus, only to die again. But that is not proven by any other Scripture, and, frankly, it would be ludicrous. Why would the Lord send them back to Hades while He continued into Heaven? The apostle Paul cites the Psalmist to tell us that Jesus led the captives out of captivity:

Therefore, when He ascended up on high, He said He “led from captive the captured, and gave gifts to men.”¹

(Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the same who ascended up far above all the heavens so that He might fill all things.) (Ephesians 4:8-10)

These Scriptures indicate that when the Lord rose from the dead He led out of Hades the saints that had died before. They were resurrected bodily and went with Him to Heaven where they await the completion of God’s redemptive plan. Among these may be the twenty-four elders who sit on thrones surrounding the throne of God:

After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in Heaven, and the first voice that I heard was as if it were of a trumpet speaking with me, that said, “Come up here, and I will show you things that must be hereafter.”

And immediately I was in the spirit, and, look, a throne was set in Heaven, and one sat on the throne. And He who sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardinian stone, and there was a rainbow round about the throne, that looked like an emerald.

And around the throne were twenty-four seats, and I saw upon the seats twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

And out of the throne proceeded lightning and thundering and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire

burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like crystal, and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.

And each of the four creatures had six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within. And they do not rest day and night, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.”

And when those creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sat on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sat on the throne, and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for you have created all things, and for your pleasure they are and were created. (Revelation 4:1-11)

Other than those saints who rose with Jesus, no others have yet received their new bodies. Yet according to Colton Burpo, his great grandfather has a new body:

“He’s in heaven. He’s got a new body. Jesus told me if you don’t go to heaven, you don’t get a new body.”

Colton is wrong on both counts. If his great-grandfather is in Heaven, he has not yet received his new body; that will come with the resurrection of the righteous in Christ. And the unrighteous will receive new bodies when they are resurrected to face the Great White Throne Judgment:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or his image, nor had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This is the first resurrection.

But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

Blessed and holy is he who has a part in the first resurrection; on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him for a thousand years....

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.

And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

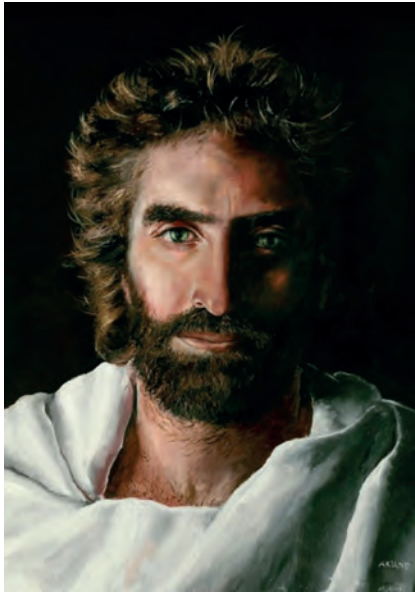
¹ Psalms 68:18: You have ascended on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts for men—yes, for the rebellious also—so that YHWH God might live among them.

And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:4-15)

The unrighteous will be raised to face the second death. Those who have died in Christ since the Lord rose from the dead still await the resurrection of their bodies. They are not in Heaven bodily. At best, their souls—their consciousness—with their spirits are in Heaven. As disembodied spirits they do not have the same substance as those resurrected with the Lord.

We can't explain these things beyond what is written, but we do know that the general resurrection of the saints—the first of two future resurrections—will unite the souls and spirits with the bodies of those who sleep in Christ. Thus, it is highly unlikely that anyone given the privilege of going to Heaven would be able to embrace them, or that they would have received new bodies with wings attached.

On the subject of pictorial representations of Jesus, we are told that Todd would often show Colton artists' renderings of "Jesus," all of which Colton said did not look like Him. But one day, Todd showed Colton a picture of "Jesus" (right) titled "Prince of Peace." It was painted by a young girl named Akiane Kramarik.



At the age of four, Akiane began to exhibit exceptional talent as a painter in acrylics. She claimed that she was given visions by God to paint images of Heaven and of Jesus. At the age of eight she painted the incredibly life-like image of how she saw Jesus as "Prince of Peace." When Todd showed a copy of it to Colton, he looked at the picture and said, "That one's right."

As a result of Colton's response, many believe that Akiane's inspiration for her paintings must be from God, and that this is a true likeness of Jesus.

Some have said that Akiane's "Prince of Peace" looks remarkably similar to the image on the enigmatic Shroud of Turin, the alleged (by some) burial cloth of Jesus held by the



The ISA Mosaic face of "Jesus"

Roman Catholic Church at the Royal Chapel of Turin, Italy. It is also compared to the ISA Tile (below), a mosaic which is said to have served as the model for numerous ancient classical depictions of Jesus. This mosaic was discovered in 2002 by Philip E.

Dayvault in the depots of a museum in Sanliurfa, Turkey. It is said to be derived from the image on the Shroud of Turin. (ISA is the Arabic or Muslim name for "Jesus.")

Dayvault has produced what he calls a "Progressive Overlay Comparison of the 'ISA Mosaic Tile', the "Prince of Peace" and the Shroud of Turin." Using computer technology, Dayvault produced gradual fade-ins from the Shroud to the mosaic, from the Shroud to Akiane's painting, "Prince of Peace," and from the mosaic to "Prince of Peace." The gradual imposition of one image over the other with the primary image fading away gives the impression of such similarity they must depict the same person.



The face of the image on the Shroud of Turin
(Left: as it appears in the negative; Right: a negative of the negative image, resulting in a positive image)

At first viewing of the clever imposition of each face over the others, one would be impressed how similar they are. But after looking at the transformations several times, I came to the conclusion that the face on the Shroud, which is in repose (the eyes are closed, as in death), and that of the mosaic, which is in life (the eyes are opened), are not nearly as similar as Dayvault says, or that casual viewing might suggest. The face of the image on the Shroud has a long, rectangularity about it, whereas the mosaic face is ovoid. The eyebrows on the Shroud's image are horizontal; on the mosaic they are arched.

In looking closely at Akiane's "Prince of Peace" imposed over the Shroud's face, again the Shroud's face is longer and more rectangular than that of Akiane's painting. The eyebrows on the Shroud are more horizontal, while those on Akiane's painting tend to be angular, higher at the outside than at the inside of the face. The hair is longer on the Shroud, and the beard is more full.

Too often, people see what they want to see. And, sadly, no amount of reason, logic or empirical evidence will sway them from their position. I'd dare say one could use a computer to morph Adolph Hitler into Mickey Mouse, or vice versa.

More importantly, for those who wish to associate the Shroud of Turin, Akiane's "Prince of Peace," and Colton Burpo's "Jesus" he claims to have met in Heaven, there is a huge discrepancy: Colton's description of Jesus' wounds in His body:

"Jesus was the only one in heaven who had purple on, Dad. Did you know that?"...And he had this gold thing on his head..." Colton chirped enthusiastically. He put both hands on top of his head in the shape of a circle.

"Like a crown?"

"Yeah, a crown, and it had this...this diamond thing in the middle of it and it was kind of pink. And he has markers, Dad."

...I thought through what he had said so far...John the Baptist, Jesus and his clothes, rainbows, horses. I got all that. But what about the markers? What did Colton mean when he said Jesus has markers?

What are markers to a little kid?

Suddenly, I had it. "Colton, you said Jesus had markers. You mean like markers that you color with?"

Colton nodded. "Yeah, like colors. He had colors on him."

"Like when you color a page?"

"Yeah."

Well, what color are Jesus' markers?"

"Red, Daddy. Jesus has red markers on him."

At that moment, my throat nearly closed with tears as I suddenly understood what Colton was trying to say. Quietly, carefully, I said, "Colton, where are Jesus' markers?"

Without hesitation, he stood to his feet. He held out his right hand, palm up and pointed to the center of it with his left. Then he held out his left palm and pointed with his right hand. Finally, Colton bent over and pointed to the tops of both his feet.

"That's where Jesus' markers are, Daddy," he said.

I drew in a sharp breath. *He saw this. He had to have.*

We know where the nails were driven when Jesus was crucified, but you don't spend a lot of time going over those gruesome facts with toddlers and preschoolers. In fact, I didn't know if my son had ever seen a crucifix.

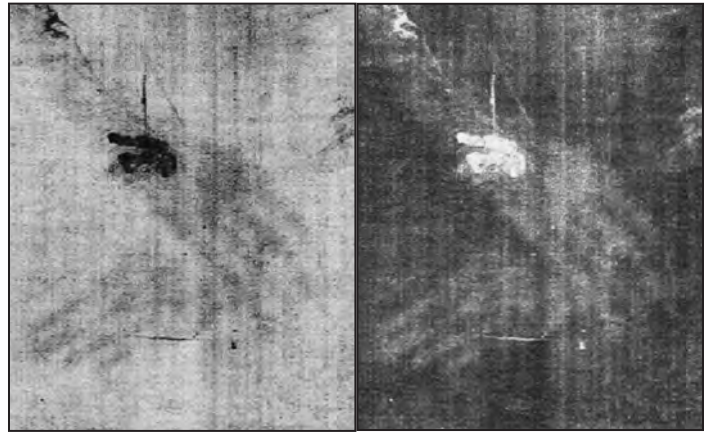
Todd Burpo didn't know where Colton may have learned of "this stuff." But kids pick up things easily. Colton needn't have seen a crucifix; there are plenty of references to the Lord's crucifixion, as well as images, to be found in non-Catholic Sunday school resources.

Still, Colton's casual expression left Todd flabbergasted.

So what is the problem with Colton's description of Jesus' "markers"?

It has been testified by forensics experts and medical professionals that if the Romans crucified people with spikes in the palms of their hands, the flesh and bones in the hands would not be able to bear the weight of a body hanging on the cross. The Romans would have driven the spikes through the wrists, between the bones of the forearm at that point in order to give greater support to the sagging body. By pointing directly in the center of his palms, Colton was describing not the actual place where the spikes were driven, but where common pictorial depictions of the crucifixion place them.

On the Shroud of Turin the blood flows from the wrists of the image (see upper right), more in keeping with forensic science which insists that spikes in the palms of the hands would not support the body of a crucified person. The angle of the blood flowing from the wound on the wrist is consistent with the angle of the arms outstretched.



Detail of image on the Shroud of Turin, showing blood flowing from the wrists. (Left: original [negative]; Right: negative of negative = positive.)

So these images and Colton's description of "Jesus" are not truly consistent.

This isn't to give credibility to the Shroud, but if people are going to use the Shroud in association with Akiane's painting and Colton Burpo's testimony, we should be aware of the discrepancies.

Although today little note is taken of God's prohibition against the Israelites making images of things that are in Heaven or on earth as part of the Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-5), understanding that the prohibition was enacted as part of His command not to worship such images, we cannot take lightly anyone's claim to create images of the Lord.

People are actually believing that God gave Akiane Kramarik the vision to paint this picture of Jesus. They truly believe that they are looking into His eyes, or, more accurately, into an image that is an exact replication of His eyes and face.

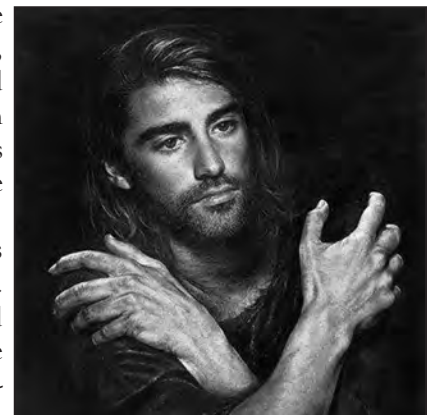
This alone could give impetus to idolatry. And that is why I don't believe God would allow this, let alone inspire it.

Yet because of Colton Burpo's testimony, Akiane Kramarik's image of "Jesus" is receiving even greater acclaim than before.

But does Akiane really receive visions, or at least inspiration from God? If so, then her paintings are equivalent to Scripture on a visual level. We must believe and accept them as from God, simply because He would have inspired them, and He does not spread His knowledge and gifts haphazardly.

The fact is that Akiane has painted at least two other images of "Jesus" that are offered for sale through her gallery. (She may have painted more, but they are not found there.) One, titled, "I Am," painted later than the one Colton says is the right one, looks similar, but not exactly the same (right).

In Akiane's art, Jesus is one handsome man. Does he look as He did when on earth, or did He get better looking? Evidently everyone else looks the same, albeit younger if they died in old age, so we should expect that Jesus would look the same as well. What does



Scripture say about his looks? Not much, except that He wasn't handsome, so that anyone would desire Him:

For He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground. He has no form nor handsomeness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. (Isaiah 53:2)

Nor does the "Jesus" Colton claims to have seen in Heaven match the Jesus that the apostle John saw:

I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I was in the Spirit on the Day of the Lord, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven assemblies that are in Asia—to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and belted about the waist with a golden belt.

His head and His hair were white like wool—as white as snow—and His eyes were like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of many waters. (Revelation 1:9-15)

John's description of Jesus is similar to that of Daniel's description of YHWH who appeared to him at Babylon:

Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was belted with fine gold of Uphaz:

His body also was like the beryl, and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like the color of polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude. (Daniel 10:5-6)

We know that when Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, He looked much as He did before He died, except that His hands and side bore the marks of His crucifixion. This is how His disciples were able to recognize Him as resurrected in His body, and not just as a spirit. But John's descriptions of Him since that time reveal Him as transformed from His mundane body to a glorious, resurrected body of eternal quality.

Is He able to shed one body for another at will? I suppose that is possible. But considering the discrepancies among the various claims to have seen Him either in Heaven or on earth, these things cannot be relied upon.

All we know for certain is that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father, which demonstrates His position as the Father's most favored. Scripture's description of Him in that position does not match the mundane descriptions offered by those who claim to have seen Him.

The images of Jesus painted by most artists tend to make Him look like a Hollywood heartthrob. No doubt, this appeals to women especially, who are prone to look upon the Lord as a love object rather than as their Lord and Master to whom they must answer for their sins. That's not to say the Lord is not loving; it's merely to say that emotions often cloud one's perception of reality.

Although this particular painting by Akiane has grabbed the attention of Christians in particular, most of her paintings are of mundane things—people, landscapes, animals, flowers, etc. She has a few images that she says depict Heaven, which show alabaster buildings and flowered landscapes.

But Akiane's spiritual musings are not restricted to "Christian" symbolism. Some are esoteric and even eastern mystical. One in particular is of a Buddhist monk posing in meditation, inspired by such a monk who came to visit her one day. Her description of how she was inspired to paint it accompanies the picture on the facing page.

Akiane's portraits of angels, allegedly inspired by God, are depictions of whimsical females with wings, more akin to fairies than to the warriors of God's armies. The pictures on the facing page are examples.

One should reasonably expect that if God were truly behind such artistic expressions of heavenly beings, at least some of them would match Scripture which in every instance describes angels in masculine terms with masculine names. But all of Akiane's "angels" are female.

For some reason, Satan has convinced even the most ardent believers in Jesus to accept "angels" as female. Most Christian paintings and statues of "angels" are feminine. Yet God's Word portrays them as fearsome warriors commissioned to fight against the forces of Satan's dark domain.

These things are an affront to God. And wouldn't you know it, but the angels in the movie *Heaven is For Real* are depicted mostly as females also, not so much by their physical presence which is kept obscured through special effects, but by their voices, both singing and spoken.

In the book, at least Colton speaks of God's angels as warriors alongside whom the saints will fight, including Colton's father:

So here we have a book and movie allegedly depicting a young boy's visit to Heaven, with dubious elements, giving credibility to the paintings of a spiritually confused young lady, produced by "Bishop" T.D. Jakes, of questionable spiritual understanding, broadly accepted within the Christian community. And few are questioning the validity of it all.

Nor are many, if any, questioning Todd Burpo's qualifications to teach the Body of Christ. By all indications, he is a genuine believer in Christ Jesus; he understands God's Word sufficiently to relate some elements of truth beyond the milk of the Word. And there's no question that he is sincere in his faith and his love for his family. It's just that such experiences can be pretty heady, and cause one to give more credence to what one hears than should be given.

Something that struck me as questionable is Colton's claim that Jesus wanted his dad to become a pastor:



AKIANE KRAMARIK'S DESCRIPTION FOR HER
PAINTING OF A BUDDHIST MONK

I was always interested in Asian culture, and recently my interest focused on Southeast Asia—India, in particular.

My dilemma was that there were virtually no Asian Indians in our local area, and if I had worked only from my imagination, it still would not have been enough, because any authentic culture demands a thorough knowledge of traditions and customs.

Ironically, a few months later a gentleman from England called my gallery to make an appointment with me. When he arrived to our Idaho gallery we were stunned to see a Hindu Swami from top to bottom dressed in his own traditional robes.

His intention was only to share an urgent, confidential and spiritual message, then return back home. But after hearing him, we all convinced him to stay with us longer. During five days of his visit he was teaching us about his culture and faith, eventually agreeing to model for me.

This turned out to be a four-month-long painting project, because every detail had to be authentically accurate.

The Enlightenment is not only about the Hindu worship and prayer, but about all of us finding our own way to spiritual enlightenment, peace and contentment.

Respecting the differences of our spiritual crossroad paths demonstrates maturity and is part of reaching the enlightenment.

Everybody needs time to reflect and contemplate, and the most inspirational and peaceful place to do so is the nature.

Through the Swami's focus on beauty, wisdom and love everything is reviving, both spiritual and physical thirst is getting quenched, and the scorched hill is releasing its first flower as a symbol of rebirth.



"The Angel"
A "Guardian Angel"
By Akiane at age 10



"Angel Love"

Hair of pure gold. Veil of pure energy. Face of pure beauty. What the angel gazes at is of eternal significance. Yet what it is has not been revealed to me.

By Akiane at age 11



"Battle"
By Akiane at age 16

Then [Todd's] Mom asked Colton an odd question. "Did Jesus say anything about your dad becoming a pastor?"

Just as I was wondering privately why in the world something like my vocation would even come up, Colton surprised me when he nodded enthusiastically. "Oh, yes! Jesus said he went to Daddy and told him he wanted Daddy to be a pastor and Daddy said yes, and Jesus was really happy."

What is questionable is the Lord being so happy about someone wanting to be a pastor in the institutional church system. Pastors act primarily as priests to their congregations, and are bound by the theological interpretations of Scripture in which they are educated. That is not the pattern for the Body of Christ established by the Lord. The priesthood of all believers is subdued to the authority of pastors. Jesus tells us in His Word that He hates the works of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6-16).

The word Greek word *Nicolaitan* is a combination of *Nico* (victory) + *Laitan* (laity), which equates to those who assume victory over the laity. This is what pastors within institutional Christianity do by the very nature of their jobs. It isn't that these pastors are evil or hold the same pagan doctrines of the Nicolaitans of which Jesus spoke. Many are good men who truly wish to serve God. But they are locked into a religious system that, in Christianity, is on a par with the rabbinical Judaism that fought against God's truth during Jesus' time on earth. It isn't that Todd Burpo is evil; he certainly isn't. It's that the pastoral system under which he works is contrary to the biblical model for the gathering of the saints. That is to be under an autonomous structure wherein a plurality of qualified elders serve the local assembly, with no individual pre-eminent.

It is highly unlikely that Jesus would be "really happy" to have yet another person assume the position of sole teacher and authority over His *ecclesia*.

These (and others questionable issues found in *Heaven is for Real*) are the nuances that cast doubt on personal testimonies of those who claim to have gone to Heaven. We know that Colton did not go to Heaven in his body. His father testifies to that.

Even the apostle John says he was in the spirit in the Day of the Lord (Revelation 1:1). Paul said he knew of a man who was caught up to the Third Heaven (God's abode), whether in his body or out of his body, he didn't know. But he said something else of great interest to this study:

Over fourteen years ago I knew a man in Christ (whether in the body, I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows), such a one caught up to the Third Heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knows), how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words that it is not lawful for a man to speak. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

This man was not allowed to speak of the things he saw. No one in Scripture, other than John, has been allowed to speak of what he saw in Heaven. And that was for the purpose of giving to the Body of Christ the revelation of things to come. Why is

Colton Burpo, or anyone else, allowed to speak of things that are unlawful to utter? Do we need new revelation today?

Some say that because of the testimonies of alleged visitors to Heaven, they now believe in Heaven, or have a better understanding of Heaven, because of Colton's experience.

But does this mean they are any closer to the Lord? Or that their lives are being lived in greater obedience to His Word?

That may be true for some, not because of Colton's experience, but simply because God honors His Word, which may be found scattered throughout the book and movie. But the discrepancies are too many and varied for any mature believer to put any stock in his experience.

We are left with too many questions, and can say nothing more than that it's unlikely that Colton Burpo actually went to Heaven, but rather he may have had an intense dream, or even a vision granted him by some spirit being, the origins of which are unknown at best.

Todd Burpo's claim, "I teach what I find in Scripture," loses its impact when one realizes that he is also teaching that his son's visit to Heaven and the things he relates are truth. If he didn't believe that, he certainly wouldn't have written his book.

In conclusion, believers in Christ must not put stock in the personal testimonies of others, even those whom they know personally, including family. Let us not forget Scripture's warnings:

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 Corinthians 11:13-15)

For there will arise false christs and false prophets, and they will show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

I wouldn't count Todd Burpo among the false teachers, nor do I believe he is purposely trying to deceive people. The emotional rollercoaster on which he and his family had been riding, especially at the time they thought they were going to lose Colton, could easily set up anyone for letting down their guard. But the principle for judging deceptions rests on understanding the wiles of our enemy.

We do not need the testimonies of those who claim to have been to Heaven in order for us to believe that it is for real. We have the more sure word of prophecy, God's written Word, which, if we will live by faith, is sufficient "for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, so that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

We shouldn't judge Colton Burpo or his family for their questionable testimonies. Every servant of the Lord will stand before Him to give an account in the last days.

Rather than give ourselves over to the questionable accounts of men (and little boys), let us learn to just believe the Lord—to take God at His Word and not follow after "signs and wonders" which Satan may use to deceive us, even in the name of Jesus.

And we certainly shouldn't base our faith or beliefs on what others say they experienced. ❖



BUT WHAT'S BEHIND THE SCENES?

By Albert James Dager

THIS WRITING IS not a review of the movie or the book titled *God's Not Dead*, as much as it is an examination of the motivating philosophy behind them and the plethora of recent Christian-themed movies of late. The motion picture inspired by Rice Brooks's book by the same name is something entirely different. Whereas the book is primarily Brooks's presentation of rational and biblical responses to the anti-God arguments of secularists, the movie dramatizes the fictional lives of several people whose faith clashes with secular challenges to God's existence. The primary story is that of university freshman Josh Wheaton (Shane Harper) who finds his faith in Jesus challenged on his first day of philosophy class. Professor Radisson (Kevin Sorbo) insists that the class dispense with the "superstitions" of religion in order to focus on reason and logic as a means to discover truth. His method is succinct and cutting. Any student who wishes to receive a passing grade must immediately hand in a paper containing the three-word declaration, "God is dead." Those who do not do so will be summarily failed.

Every student does as instructed except for Josh who tells Radisson before the entire class that because he is a Christian he cannot do what the professor demands. In spite of insults and ridicule, as well as threats, from Radisson, Josh stands his ground. Radisson then challenges Josh to prove his thesis that God is not dead by presenting evidence to that end in three future class meetings.

Josh accepts the challenge with the provision that the biased Radisson not be the final judge, but that the class act as the jury. Radisson agrees, and Josh proceeds to focus his attention on the project while setting aside for the time being the needed study for his other subjects. This incurs the anger of his girlfriend who demands that he just give in so that his grades not suffer and their plans for a future together can be realized. As Josh persists in his goal she eventually tells him that their relationship is over.

Interspersed between scenes of the ongoing conflict between Josh and an increasingly irascible Radisson are stories of other people facing similar challenges to their faith—not in having to prove the existence of God, but in having to stand by their convictions regardless of the consequences.

One character, Amy (Trisha LaFache), an atheist and blogger for leftist causes, relishes challenging well-known Christians in face-to-face interviews. Her snide remarks to Willie and Korie Robinson (*Duck Dynasty*) are met with patience and kindness.

After she is told by her doctor that she has terminal cancer, Amy's world collapses, setting her up for a crisis meeting with the Lord via another challenging interview with the Christian rock band performers, Newsboys.

The movie is full of pathos, and stirs the emotions. Self-centered egotists are left puzzled and alone; a death-bed conversion takes place; atheists come to Christ. One cannot but sympathize with and even cheer for Josh as he endures the harsh treatment of his antagonist. Josh's arguments effectively destroy Radisson's anti-God position and expose his arrogance to the class.

The Gospel of personal salvation is presented in other segments of the movie, although some might consider the method a bit "preachy." But it is not presented clearly in Josh's dissertations. Josh appeals very little to Scripture, choosing rather to focus on statements by philosophers who, although professed atheists, contradict the statements of philosophers offered by Radisson in his contention that God doesn't exist.

Yet in spite of this lack of Scripture, one student tells Josh that he has become a Christian because of Josh's presentation.

The story for *God's Not Dead* was inspired by a long list of legal challenges to learning institutions and instructors that have engaged in concerted efforts to discriminate against religious expression in the classroom, particularly against Christian students. There is little fault that one may find with the movie or the book by Rice Brooks. Although I don't see why it was necessary to focus a tight close-up on Korie Robinson's long, shapely legs as she exited her car in a short-hemmed sheath dress. Must Christian film makers emulate the world by showing how sexy Christians can be?

It isn't the book or the movie believers must be cautious of; it is the underlying religious philosophy of Rice Brooks, a leading "apostle" within the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR). The NAR posits that the "Church" must take authority over the world's governments through "transforming" methods.

The New Apostolic Reformation

The "apostles" of the New Apostolic Reformation tell us that God is restoring the offices of apostles and prophets, and it seems that C. Peter Wagner in particular is the "apostle of the apostles" God is using to implement that restoration. Wagner believes that "new wineskins" are needed to contain the "new truths" being revealed by a new breed of apostles and prophets. He says that new wineskins have always been needed for all the new movements throughout the history of the churches.

The NAR's focus is as more centered on conducting spiritual warfare against demonic forces than it is on true evangelism. Once the NAR has succeeded in garnering sufficient spiritual power through its spiritual warfare methodologies (e.g., casting out spiritual powers over cities and nations) the new breed of apostles and prophets will be placed in control over every aspect of secular government. When the proper alignment of spiritual

and temporal power is balanced in favor of these apostles and prophets, then the Lord will be able to return to establish His Kingdom on the earth.

This “reformation” is an outgrowth of The World-Christian Movement, a stream of dominion theology that incorporates social action-oriented evangelization in place of evangelism. (For more detail see our special report, *The New Apostolic Reformation*.)

The World-Christian Movement is an ecumenical strategy that embraces all expressions of “Christianity” without regard to God’s truth. (See my book, *The World Christian Movement: A Great Delusion Leading to the Religio-Political State of the Anti-Christ*, Sword Publishers, 2001). It is today’s greatest deception that, if possible, would deceive the very elect:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and they will show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.

Look, I have told you beforehand. (Matthew 24:24-25)

The New Apostolic Reformation, and its “parent” World Christian Movement, base their philosophy on the expression of signs and wonders that will empower God’s people to destroy the works of the Devil and give them temporal power over the nations. Unfortunately, their proponents point to the alleged signs and wonders expressed in such aberrant practices as those of the Kansas City false prophets, the Toronto Blessing, the Brownsville Revival, and other fleshly demonstrations falsely attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit. As predicted by Christian Reconstructionist Gary North, his movement is being melded with charismatic elements to achieve Christian dominion.

But, it may be argued, are these men and women (yes, the NAR has women apostles) not doing a great work for the Lord? Are they not seeing communities and even nations being transformed through their efforts?

That’s what they tell us is happening—that millions upon millions of people, especially in third-world countries, are being converted to Christianity. As one example they may point to Uganda whose president and parliament have recently passed laws that pronounced the death sentence on homosexuals, and severe fines and punishment for anyone who does not report known homosexual activity. This followed on the heels of Christian leaders from the West strongly advocating for sanctions against homosexuality in that country.

Although homosexuality is a gross sin and an abomination to God, He has not commissioned His people to put homosexuals to death. During this age in which God’s grace is extended to all sinners from all nations, His Gospel should not be used to incite such legislation. If a secular government were to act on its own accord without interference from Christian leaders seeking to impose a moral agenda on the populace, that’s one thing. But we are to love all men, including homosexuals. The Lord will deal with all evil when He returns. Our responsibility is to be a witness of His grace and salvation.

It is only because of the efforts of non-Christian human rights groups that the Ugandan government has recently replaced the death penalty with life in prison for homosexuals.

One may ask what would prompt Christians to seek death for homosexuals and other miscreants of society? The answer

may be found in the writings of some well-known leaders within the Christian Reconstruction who believe “the Church” must bring about a moral society even if it means applying the death penalty to non-capital crimes to enforce it. One such is Ray Sutton, the Bishop Coadjutor in the Diocese of Mid-America of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Says Sutton:

First, Paul’s Romans 1:18-32 language indicates that New Testament penal sanctions are similar to the Old Testament. The vast majority of Old Testament penalties should still be instituted....the proper hermeneutic for determining what carries over into the New Testament is the principle: continue what is not changed in the New Testament. This would apply to the penal sanctions of the Old Testament. The death penalty offenses that should be extended into the New Testament are witchcraft (Deut. 18:10-11), idolatry (Deut. 13:10), murder (Gen. 9:6), blasphemy (Lev. 24:11-23), homosexuality (Lev. 18:22,29), bestiality (Lev. 18:23), rape (Deut. 22:25,27), adultery (Lev. 20:10), incest (Lev. 20:14), incorrigibility of teenagers (Deut. 21:18-20), kidnapping (Exod. 21:16), and some instances of perjury (Deut. 19:19-20).

...not every convicted homosexual would have to be put to death according to I Corinthians 6. In the New Covenant Age, only the “unreformable” element would be put to death. (Sutton’s emphasis)²

Sutton is not a wild hair; he is a leading voice in the Christian Reconstruction camp, supported by such notables as Gary North, David Chilton, Gary DeMar, and others. (See my book, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, Sword Publishers, 1990.)

The New Apostolic Reformation is among the last-days deceptions prophesied by Jesus. That deception will look and sound like the truth. So much so, that even the very elect will ask themselves, “Might this truly be of God?”

Such a deception must contain mostly biblical truth with sufficient error to lead astray into spiritual ruin. At the least, those who follow it—if even for only a short period of time—will be found exhausting their energies in religious works that are not anointed by God.

That’s not to say our heavenly Father can’t use them. Nor is it to say that everyone involved in this movement is purposely deceiving others. But this is a great deception led by the deceived who, because of their eagerness to see this wicked world transformed into a moral society, have bought into the lie that they can achieve that transformation through human effort. The delusion underlies their belief that they are being led by the Holy Spirit.

Still, they have been made aware through the citing of Scripture that there will be no transformation of human government without the Lord present on the earth. They have been given biblical proof that all efforts to achieve that transformation are doomed to failure and further delusion. Yet they persist.

The impetus behind the rash of Christian films of late, including *God’s Not Dead*, is the desire to make sufficient inroads

² Ray Sutton, *That You May Prosper: Dominion by Covenant* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1987), p. 189.

into the field of mass media (which includes the arts, entertainment and sports), as one of the seven sectors (aka, “mountains” or “spheres”) of society targeted by the World-Christian Movement so that one day that sphere will be dominated by Christians. In truth, the taking over of these sectors is of greater importance to the World Christian Movement than evangelizing people.

Although these self-proclaimed apostles are deluded, some of the things they produce may be found without error. That can be said about movies such as *God’s Not Dead*. Yet in spite of the substantial box office success of Christian films, an honest assessment will show that the vast majority of the audience are already Christians of one persuasion or another. Listen to the comments of attendees as they leave the theater, and that becomes obvious. Christian reviewers give these films biased raves while secular reviewers see them as Christian propaganda. In essence, the producers are preaching to the choir.

As well, the Christian media professionals involved in these movies must out of necessity involve themselves in many ungodly media productions to keep their careers viable. But the NAR doesn’t mind compromising for the present as long as future dominion can be realized. In other words, it adopts the rationalist position that the end justifies the means.

The other six spheres of society that must be taken over by believers according to the World-Christian Movement and the NAR before Jesus can return are: the family; the Church; government; education; commerce; science and technology;

The goal was summed up by the late Ralph D. Winter in addressing the forming of the University of the Nations (UofN):

One of the purposes of the UofN in Europe is to counteract the influence of these philosophies, promulgated here on this continent, which have led the whole world on a path away from God. We want to put God back into the centre of higher education. And into the centre of the influential sectors of society, including the family, the Church, education, government, the media, the arts, entertainment and sports, and commerce, science and technology. Our goal is not to just make individual disciples, but to disciple the nations, to bring God’s presence and ways into these influential parts of society in every country.³

The foundation for this error is the misapplication of Matthew 28 in which Jesus tells His disciples to “make disciples of all nations.” The World-Christian Movement interprets this to mean that “the Church” is to make disciples of the nations themselves rather than to make disciples from out of all nations.

Notice Ralph Winter’s statement of the goal beyond making individual disciples: “to bring God’s presence and ways into these influential parts of society in every country.” In practical terms, and the way this is promoted within the World-Christian Movement, if a leader of a nation, city or region comes to Christ, even as a nominal Catholic, that nation, city or region is considered “evangelized”; the Great Commission has been completed there even if every other person in that area is a flaming atheist or heathen.

³ “Discipling the Nations, Seven influential sectors of society hold the keys,” UofN Lausanne, www.uofn.ch/lausanne/society.htm (link no longer available).

Also, if a nation’s laws are based on biblical morality, that nation can be said to be evangelized even if only a few citizens are truly born-again believers. It is taught that Jesus is found in all religions anyway, so evangelism may naturally take a back seat to social action. This is why the social gospel takes precedence over ministering the Gospel to individuals. That’s not to say the movers and shakers within the World-Christian Movement are against evangelism; but their primary goal is evangelization of society, not evangelism of individuals.

It is that mindset that lurks behind the Christian movies that are garnering such praise from the naïve and uninformed. Not that these movies don’t have pragmatic merit in terms of sharing God’s Word. We can be thankful for that. But all of Scripture refutes the World-Christian Movement’s position, telling us that evil will grow worse as the day of the Lord’s return approaches.

And what will taking over the sector of “the Church” mean in light of the tremendous power and influence of Roman Catholicism, Mormonism and other institutional systems that still exists? It will mean overlooking the false religious system’s ungodly doctrines and practices in order to form a cooperative effort with the Vatican. That is why the World-Christian Movement and the New Apostolic Reformation are so strongly ecumenical, working with Catholic priests throughout the world to accomplish dominion over that particular sector of society. Who do you suppose would be the supreme leader of “the Church” sector?

Dominion theology is not new; it has been around since the days of Augustine at least, and materialized to a great degree with the “conversion” of Constantine and the eventual development of the Holy Roman Empire. Roman Catholicism has never given up its belief that it is the Kingdom of God on earth ruled by the Vicar of Christ with a perceived mandate to rule the nations with a rod of iron. The ecumenical movement, created by the Roman Catholic Church under the auspices of Vatican II, is beguiling people like C. Peter Wagner, Rice Brooks, and many others into believing they can work with the papacy to achieve their own goal for world dominion through which Christ will rule the nations not in person, but through “the Church.”

What escapes most Christians today is the history behind dominion theology that originated in Roman Catholicism and found a commiserating spirit in the Latter-Rain Movement of the 1940s. The same belief in a supernatural expression of Christianity that will manifest itself in world dominion is being propagated today by self-professed apostles and prophets who believe they will guide “the Church” in establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. If it must be accomplished through Roman Catholicism even in concert with false religions such as Mormonism, and even Islam, that’s alright. Jesus is found in Islam, too, right? And aren’t Mormons Christians of a different sort? They would certainly say they are (even if they don’t believe anyone can be saved outside of Mormonism).

But what about 1 Corinthians 12:3?

(Continued on page 27)



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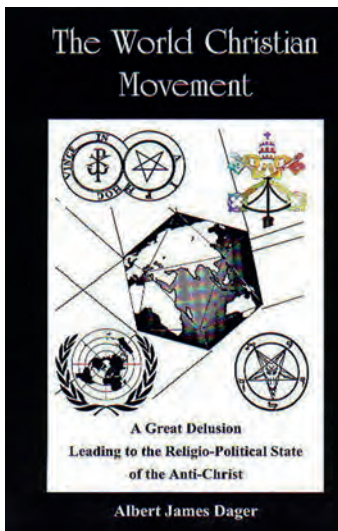
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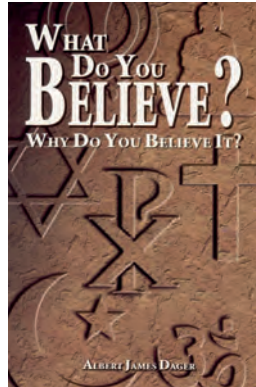
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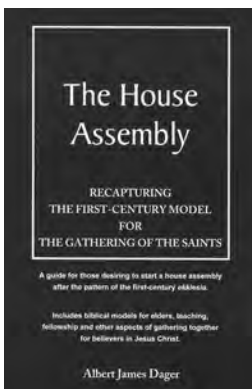
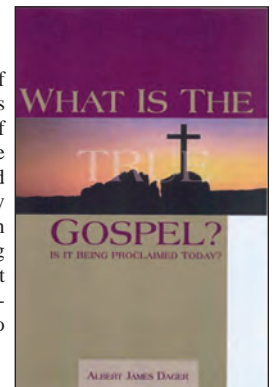


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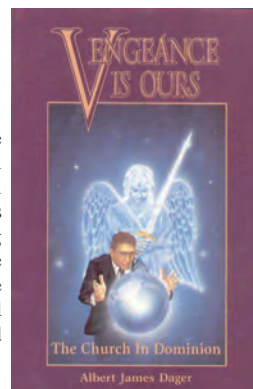


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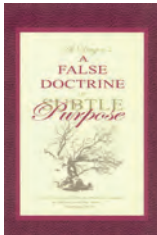
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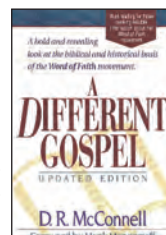


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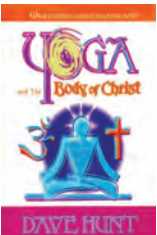


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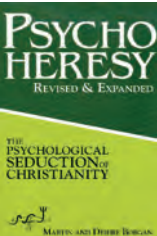


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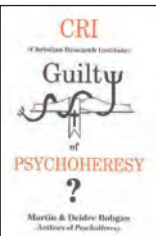


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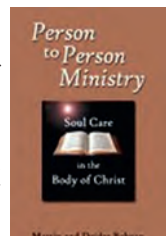


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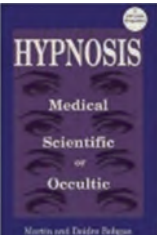


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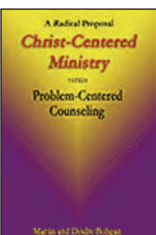


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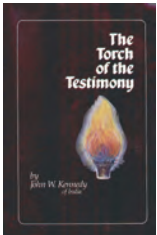


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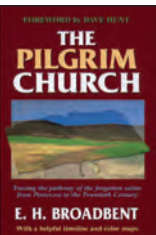


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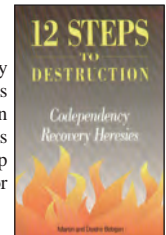


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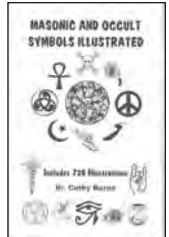


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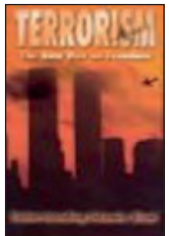


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FALSE

TEACHERS

Beware of false prophets. They come to you in sheeps clothing, but they are ferocious wolves. Many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Matthew 7:15

THE BODY OF Christ has many members whose hearts are desirous of learning and following God's truth. Sadly, however, most (and I don't mean just many) are weak in understanding and knowledge of the truth to sufficiently keep them from being deluded on many levels. It isn't that they are rebellious as much as they are naïve and uninformed.

Whereas, after a few years at most, brothers in Christ should be able to minister the Word of God effectively enough to be used by the Lord for His Kingdom, most are no further advanced in their understanding than they were at their new birth. This is largely due to institutional Christianity which guards its bastions of theological disciplines by impressing upon the average believer in Jesus that he has no standing or ability to minister unless he first submits himself to the formal training of some institutional seminary or Bible school.

Thus, the vast majority of Christians receive teaching from church leaders who are educated in certain theological disciplines rather than in Holy Spirit-led study of God's Word. Those leaders are not equipped to discern truth from error as much as they are to merely repeat what they have been taught by their particular institution's theological system.

Additionally, because of the influence of the mass communications media most Christians lack discernment and are quick to follow whatever popular religious movement or teaching is promoted in the Christian media and Christian bookstores. This is especially true of those movements and teachings that seem to promise opportunities for growth in numbers of adherents.

Pastors often promote those movements and teachings from their pulpits. If they can bolster their standing within their congregations or increase attendance by bringing in teachers who are popular—whose books are on bestseller lists and/or who have broad media outreach—they will give them access to their pulpits. Little if any testing by God's Word is conducted. And if it is, as long as the proof texts offered by those teachers seem to verify what they say, that is sufficient. What is lacking is understanding that even if a person speaks truth it doesn't mean he is of God. With this in mind, I would like to offer several thoughts on how to guard against false teachings.

Yet I must preface these thoughts with a caveat: just because someone teaches some error(s) doesn't necessarily mean that someone is a false teacher. A false teacher is one who purposely teaches false doctrine in order to deceive or to turn people away from God's truth. Anyone can make a mistake. Sadly, some "discernment" ministries are quick to brand as false teachers

good brothers in Christ who may hold to a different understanding of God's Word in a few areas than they do.

One characteristic of a false teacher, however, is that they refuse correction from God's Word when it is pointed out to them that they are clearly wrong in their teaching. Rather than submit to the truth, they will resist, and even denigrate those who have pointed out their error to them.

This isn't to say that there is any teacher who is infallible; we all misunderstand things at different stages of our growth in Christ. But there is a difference between misstating something and teaching things that lead astray.

It is my hope that this writing will stir within the hearts of men a desire to study God's Word diligently so they will not be ashamed at His coming, correctly understanding the Word of Truth by which they were begotten by God (2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:18). And once they come to understanding, may they have the desire to minister God's truth regardless of the consequences.

POPULARITY

Human nature tends toward following the majority. But the majority are usually wrong, especially when it comes to spiritual matters. With some very few exceptions, when teachers develop large contingencies of followers, and they are invited to speak to multitudes at churches and conferences, these are good signs that they may not be of God:

"Woe to you, when everyone speaks well of you! For so did their fathers of the false prophets." (Luke 6:26)

Popularity does not *de facto* brand a person a false teacher. But false teaching is more likely than truth to result in popularity, at least for the long term. For that reason, popular teachers must be scrutinized most thoroughly.

There is no example in Scripture where a true prophet was popular among the people. True prophets and teachers are seldom received by those closest to them. As Jesus said, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house." Not even Moses maintained the good will of the Hebrews after leading them from slavery in Egypt. For short periods of time the Hebrews were willing to adhere to the words of God's true prophets, but when hardships came they turned to the false prophets for soothing words of comfort.

What makes popular teachers so well accepted today is their ability to speak soothing words of comfort to the people just as the false prophets of old did. They focus on how much God

loves them and wants them to lead victorious and abundant lives—how they will be successful in their goals for life if they trust God. One of their favorite verses of Scripture is Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Taking this verse out of context, they assert that athletes can win their contests, businessmen can be successful, any human endeavor can bring success. They teach God’s Word in a manner which suggests that obedience to His Word will bring an abundance of temporal joy and peace—that all will be well with the world.

Yes, they talk about repentance and how sin interferes with that abundant life—how the abundant life escapes us. But more often the implication is that our problems are caused by a low self-image—a lack of self love: we can’t love God or anyone else if we don’t love ourselves first. But this is a lie based on psychological theory. There is no lack of self-love even among those who outwardly seem to hate themselves. What they really hate are their circumstances, their looks, their lack of confidence—anything that makes them unhappy. But they love themselves sufficiently that they would like to change their circumstances.

The reason the Lord commands us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves is that we already love ourselves. Thus we should love our neighbor in the same way. His Word also says,

No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Called Out. (Ephesians 5:29)

In essence, popular teachers consistently meld with biblical truth psychological theories, especially those that promote self esteem. They are so clever in their ability to do so, often saying they are against psychology, that their listeners will tell us, “It’s not psychology; they are against psychology. It’s all God’s Word.”

Unfortunately, most believers are so woefully ignorant of psychological manipulation that they can’t resist it when it’s practiced on them. Even some who teach don’t realize they are using psychological manipulation on their listeners. That is how deceptive the enemy’s methods can be.

The bottom line is that false teachers inordinately focus on feel-good, positive messages that appeal to the masses.

It isn’t that God’s love isn’t real; it most certainly is. It’s that the picture of God’s love offered by false teachers leaves no room for the whole counsel of God. It’s as if God will accept us wherever we are, and we are to accept ourselves in whatever condition we are at the moment. But Jesus didn’t come to give us a good self-image; He came to die for our sins and open the way for relationship with the Father.

Yes, God can and will often work in those hearing the elements of truth within the messages of false teachers. But it’s in spite of these people’s teachings, not because of them.

False teachers may even believe that God told them to act or teach contrary to His Word, as if God has changed His mind or made special provision for them. They are deluded into thinking that they are serving God and may fully expect to be rewarded for their efforts. But the Lord warns us:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your

name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works?’ And then I will say to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work wickedness.’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Self-delusion is the most difficult delusion from which to escape. The greater judgment is upon those who are deluded within themselves than those who are deluded by others:

My brethren, many of you should not be teachers, knowing that we will receive the greater condemnation. (James 3:1)

No doubt my words will come across as polemic to some, especially those enamored by popular teachers. But I assure you, this writing is prompted by my love for the Lord and His Word as well as for my brethren in Christ.

It isn’t that one may lose one’s salvation by listening to false teachers, but the deceptions they espouse have left the Body of Christ largely impotent in serving the Lord—even resulting in them promoting false teachers among other brethren.

THE TRUTH THEY SPEAK

False prophets often speak much truth. But even the truth can lead astray if it is used to give credibility to lies.

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree brings forth good fruit, but a rotten tree brings forth bad fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is chopped down and cast into the fire. This is why by their fruits you will know them.” (Matthew 7:15-22)

It is generally assumed that if a prophet or teacher speaks truth, then that is the fruit by which he is to be judged. As long as what they say is true, then they are judged a true prophet or teacher. But God’s Word warns otherwise:

“If there arises among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, by which he spoke to you saying, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. For YHWH your God tests you, to know whether you love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deuteronomy 13:1-3)

True, this is speaking of prophets, not teachers. But there is little difference, and the principle is the same. Teachers command as much, and often more, attention from their listeners than do prophets. It all has to do with truth vs. error. If a teacher speaks truth but in other ways leads astray from the Word of God, then that teacher is a false teacher no matter how much truth he speaks.

He may lead astray by other teachings or by his actions. Those actions may include overt sin that causes the brethren to stumble into sin as well.

Those actions may also include commiserating with others whose teachings lead away from God's truth; the credibility one gives to false teachers brands that one a false teacher as much as those to whom that credibility is given.

Then there are those who lead lives of sin and/or are involved in scandals while teaching truth.

Jimmy Swaggart is a good example of a man who has spoken much truth. When he was exposed twice for the same sin, he made an outward show of repentance which brought tears to the eyes of those who looked up to him.

Any person should be forgiven his sins when he truly repents. In Swaggart's case, he chose to repent outwardly at first, but when he was told by the leaders of his church that he must take a sabbatical from teaching for a season and would have to be overseen by certain men for that time, he balked at their demands. Rather than submit himself to their correction and oversight, he turned on them, even going so far as to appear with Paul and Jan Crouch on TBN's *Praise the Lord* program to vilify his superiors and the Assemblies of God organization.

I have no love for any institutional church system or denomination, and the Assemblies of God has proven itself unfaithful in many respects, not the least of which is the endorsement by its leaders of the Kansas City false prophets and other similar groups. But Jimmy Swaggart enjoyed the benefits of that institution for many years, and willingly seemed to subject himself to its authority. Yet when it came time for him to humble himself before those he called his authority, he reneged. Rather than submit, he went to the camp of the false teachers and bragged, "There would be no Assemblies of God if it weren't for Jimmy Swaggart."

He continues to teach much truth to a greatly depleted audience, but there is no way one should give credibility to him as a teacher. His example to the Body of Christ has caused many to stumble and to think that submission to authority is a subjective choice, even when the authority is right in its position. He is leading believers in Christ astray. As such, he may be classified a false teacher even though most of what he teaches is truth.

I am not judging Jimmy Swaggart's heart—that is our Father's prerogative; Swaggart may be self-deluded even if sincere. I am merely presenting him as an example of one who teaches truth but leads astray.

Jimmy Swaggart is by no means the only such example to the Body of Christ. There are a number of people who have publicly fallen and have brought scandal to the name of Jesus, yet they continue in their "ministries" as if nothing had happened. Some have been divorced from believing wives as many as four times, yet they enjoy the admiration and support of hundreds of thousands of Christians.

I do not suppose to judge these men; we are all still sinners saved by God's grace, and many practice secret sin. Secret sin is no better than open sin, but open sin brings a reproach against the name of our Lord and Savior. The Lord will judge His own servants. But there must be some accountability for them, and a sense of propriety for those who follow them lest they fall into the same trap. Anyone who sets a wrong example to lead others away from true belief and/or practice may be classified a false teacher even if all he says is true.

THE MEDIA AS WELL

The same principles that apply to individuals as teachers apply to media productions. There are motion pictures, videos, and television and radio productions that contain excellent information and teachings from Scripture, but give credibility to their producers whose overall agenda may be contrary to Scripture. An example is a film that contains much truth and has been an inspiration to many Christians.

That film, *God's Not Dead*, has gotten only positive reviews from Christian critics. Based on the book of the same title by Rice Broocks, *God's Not Dead* dramatizes a confrontation between a Christian university student and the atheist professor of his philosophy class. The confrontation centers on the existence of God, and there is ample evidence presented in the movie that favors His existence. Who can argue with that?

Actually, nobody, including me. But most Christians don't know who Rice Broocks is or what his underlying religious philosophy is. And I am under no illusion that anyone will be swayed by what I might reveal here. His film is far too popular among Christians to succumb to any reasoned critique.

But here I go anyway.

According to Rice Broocks's Web site:

Broocks is the co-founder of the Every Nation family of churches, which currently includes more than 1,000 churches in more than 60 countries. Present on hundreds of college campuses, Broocks has spent the last 30 years with Every Nation focusing on equipping college students around the world to defend their faith.

Broocks also serves as the senior minister of Bethel World Outreach Church in Nashville, Tenn., where he provides oversight for this multi-ethnic, multisite church, currently meeting in locations in Middle Tennessee, Texas, and Arizona.

He is the author of several books, including his upcoming release, *God's Not Dead, Every Nation In Our Generation* and the *Purple Book* (Biblical Foundations).

Broocks holds a Bachelor of Business Administration from Mississippi State University, a master's degree from Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss., as well as a doctorate in missiology from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

It would seem that God is behind such an extensive outreach. But what is the underlying motivation for Broock's efforts?

The Every Nation family of churches was formerly Morningstar International, a spin-off of Maranatha Campus Ministries founded by Bob and Rose Weiner as a loose group known merely as Maranatha in 1972 on Murray State University campus in Murray, Kentucky. In 1975 the group organized in Kentucky as Maranatha Christian Church, Inc., and by 1975 began organizing in several other states.

Maranatha Campus Ministries' mode of operation was based on the shepherding/discipleship model established by the infamous Fort Lauderdale Five (Bob Mumford, Derek Prince, Don Basham, Ern Baxter and Charles Simpson). Maranatha eventually broke up amid many scandals associated with spiritual and mental abuse.

Today Rice Broocks is named among the latter-day apostles and prophets of the New Apostolic Reformation associated with the World Christian Movement.

All involved in these movements subscribe to one form of dominion theology or another. Some deny they are seeking to establish a theocracy, but that's not the issue. The issue is a concerted desire and attempt to establish "the Church" in authority over all governments of the world without Christ present on the earth. This, they say, will be attained through the "transformation" of society via a social gospel based on evangelization (not evangelism) which does not necessarily include the proclamation of the true Gospel of the Kingdom as commissioned by the Lord. They keep the Body of Christ at large in the dark, revealing their true agendas to only their initiates.

These subjects are far too complex to address in this article, but they are covered in my books *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, (Sword Publishers, 1990) and *The World Christian Movement*, (Sword Publishers, 2001), as well as the Media Spotlight special report, *The New Apostolic Reformation*.

The subtitle of Broocks's book, *Every Nation in Our Generation* is "Recovering the Apostolic Mandate."

The apostolic mandate, originally posited by the Latter-Rain Movement of the 1940s, and reiterated by C. Peter Wagner, the Kansas City Prophets, and other aberrant groups and false teachers, is to bring all Christians under obedience to certain alleged last-days self-proclaimed apostles and prophets. These self-proclaimed apostles will guide "the Church" into an authoritative structure that will be equipped to rule the world, thus preparing it for the Lord's return. There is a large, ecumenically-oriented segment within this movement which seeks unity with Roman Catholicism (and even Mormonism and non-Christian religions—especially Islam) to achieve its purposes.

It's all very heady and exciting to the unlearned, but the wise would do well to keep their distance from these ecumenical deceptions.

I offered *God's Not Dead* as merely one example of how an excellent portrayal of pure truth can lead believers to place their trust in a larger overlapping deception. It is not to impugn the faith or sincerity of those involved in the production and distribution of this movie or of Broocks's book, but merely to illustrate how we must be on guard and examine all things before lending our support to them.

But how dare anyone question such a great "move of God"? Look at how many people are being reached for Jesus through these people's efforts.

Do large numbers validate a movement as being of God? If so, then why should we not all return to "Mother Church," Roman Catholicism, which the vast majority of today's popular teachers are inclining toward through their ecumenical efforts? Roman Catholicism offers over one billion members to the cause of world Christian dominion. The question is, who besides the pope has sufficient power to head that monster?

A dirty little secret is that these popular teachers will not question or challenge Roman Catholicism and, in fact, will work with Catholic priests and bishops, encouraging new believers who are former Catholics to return to "Mother Church."

This is true of major evangelistic outreaches such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Luis Palau Ministries. Although these organizations proclaim salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, they do not book venues without the approval of the Catholic Church in the areas into which they wish to go. To receive that approval they must agree to work with Catholic priests and bishops to ensure that any Catholics who come forward for prayer are shuttled into the arms of Catholic "counselors."

Does this negate the truth of the Gospel they preach? No. But it demonstrates how the Gospel can be used to lead people into bondage to religious institutionalism.

ANOINTING vs. TALENT

Many people mistake talent for the anointing of God. There are those who are able to heap to themselves large contingencies of followers because of their oratorical skills, and to sway people away from their strongly held position. An example is King Herod:

Herod was highly displeased with those from Tyre and Sidon, but they came with one accord to him and, having made the king's chamberlain, Blastus, their friend, desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country.

And upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made a speech to them. And the people gave a shout, saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!"

And immediately the angel of the Lord struck him because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and gave up the ghost. (Acts 12:20-23)

God's judgment is not always so palpable, which may give people reason to think that He is not displeased or, worse, that He has anointed the speaker.

We're not told that Herod spoke anything that was not true—only that his oratory was so skillful that he convinced his adversaries to regard him as a god. Christians would not mistake a false teacher as God, but they will receive his words as equal to those of God's Word. This is why so many are deluded into thinking that they are hearing God's Word when in truth they are merely hearing one person's opinion on God's Word—an opinion that is not necessarily in line with God's truth.

Skillful orators are able to make the milk of God's Word seem like meat. They can even make the philosophies of men seem like deep truths from God's Word.

Talented speakers draw large followings, while those who adhere to the truth are more often shunned and discredited, even ridiculed. This is especially true of those anointed by God when they call into question the "accepted wisdom" of popular teachers.

But this is not surprising, because those anointed by God are seldom capable of delivering great oratory. More often than not they are like Moses and Paul:

And Moses said to YHWH, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant. But I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue."

And YHWH said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, YHWH? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.” (Exodus 4:10-12)

Do you look at things according to the outward appearance? If any man trusts in himself that he is Christ’s, let him think this about himself again, that, as he is Christ’s, even so we are Christ’s. For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord has given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed so that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.

For “His letters,” they say, “are heavy and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.” (2 Corinthians 10:7-10)

It may be argued that when the Lord anoints a person, that person’s speech will become more eloquent. They mistake authoritative speaking for oratorical skill.

For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, and God has chosen base things of the world, and things that are despised—yes, and things that are not—to bring to nothing things that are, so that no flesh should boast in His presence. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

As a matter of course, most true prophets and teachers are not so eloquent. You will find that false teachers are generally eloquent as a matter of course. They are seldom if ever at a loss for words unless confronted by the truth of God’s Word. In that case they may resort to ridicule and blustering in an attempt to justify themselves and discredit the words of truth that would expose them.

From what I have observed, it seems the more eloquent a teacher, the less that teacher may be trusted to rightly divide the Word of Truth or to handle God’s Word properly.

FALSE ABIDES FALSE

False teachers will often be found to abide other false teachers. There are packs of wolves in sheep’s clothing that hunt together, often appearing on the same platforms, hosting one another on their television programs, giving offerings to each other and promoting each other. False teachers never expose false teachers unless they find disagreement among their false teachings. Generally, they will denounce those who do expose false teachers.

A notorious event took place a number of years ago on TBN’s *Praise the Lord* show when Paul Crouch railed against those who were exposing the deceptions of word-faith, dominion theology and other popular winds of doctrine. At one point in his diatribe Crouch shouted, “God! Damn them to hell!”

I don’t know of any true believer who would pray that against even the most vile deceiver.

False teachers seldom if ever address deceptions or encourage their listeners to test their words or the words of other false

teachers against Scripture. Just because they preach against sin and tell their listeners to come to Christ for salvation, or to get their lives in line with God’s Word, doesn’t mean they are under God’s anointing. They may tell their listeners to test by Scripture what they say, but the thing from which they shy away for the most part is encouraging their listeners to exercise discernment.

WOMEN TEACHERS

Okay, now I’m heading into territory that most false teachers won’t touch, except in support of the wrong side. Are women who teach anointed by God? If so, how does that line up with Scripture. If not, of what spirit are they?

That’s a simple enough and fair question. If someone—man or woman—is not of God, then they must be of some other spirit, either demonic or, at best, their own human spirit. I choose to believe that most women teachers more likely operate from their own human spirit.

I fear that I will wound many good brothers and sisters with my words that follow. That is not my intention. My intention is to bring God’s Word to bear in our lives.

Even so, I’m going to make a statement that is sure to incur the wrath of many—even true believers who have been deceived into listening to women teachers: All women teachers are false teachers even when speaking the truth. This doesn’t mean they are evil people. Nor does it mean that everything they teach is false; it means they are teaching via natural ability, not via the anointing of God.

No, I’m not a woman hater. My wife Jean will attest to that, as will all the women I’ve counted among my friends all my life. My mother was the best mother one could have; I’m not angry from having suffered abuse at her hands. Don’t try to psychoanalyze me; just hear me out.

There was a time many years ago that I had no problem with the idea of women teachers. I even helped a woman who co-pastored the church we attended at the time. She also had a radio program that aired on a local station, and I helped her tape her programs. But as I came to understand God’s Word better, I realized that I had been wrong. As much as I loved her then (and love her still now) I cannot sanction what was done.

The apostle Paul said:

Let the woman learn in silence with all submission. But I do not allow a woman to teach, or to take authority over the man, but to be in silence. (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

Here come the protests: Paul was a woman-hater; these are Paul’s words, not Jesus’ words; that was a custom for Paul’s day—it doesn’t apply today; there is no distinction between men and women (which, by the way, was written by Paul [Galatians 3:28]), etc.

Would a woman-hater write this:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. (Ephesians 5:25)

Do not rebuke an elder, but treat him as a father, and the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, the younger as sisters with all purity.

Honor widows who are truly widows. (1 Timothy 5:1-3)

Paul was well aware of how women were ill-treated, especially among many of the pagan Gentile nations. He brought these words from God to them in order to elevate the status of women and remind believers that women have equal standing in God's eyes as far as relationship with Him goes. He hears the prayers of women no less than He hears the prayers of men.

This brings us to another protest that is erroneously based on Galatians 3:28-29:

There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This is offered as a proof text to support the idea that women are equal in all respects to men, including positions of leadership and teaching in the Body of Christ. But God never abrogated the roles of men and women any more than He did the roles of masters and slaves. Are Jews still Jews? Or have they become Greeks? Are Greeks still Greeks? Or have they become Jews? Are slaves equal to their masters, or are they still subservient to them? Just as our status in the world does not change simply because we come to Christ, our roles in the Body of Christ do not change. Men are still men; women are still women. And God's Word constantly makes that distinction by placing the man as the head of the woman in all things. It is in our relationship to the Father that we have equality, just as a brother and sister have equal standing before their parents. To take these verses out of context in order to justify disobedience to God is gross error.

Paul wrote these words to the Galatians as well as the words to Timothy in which he elevated the status of women. He was not double-minded. So it is obvious that his words to the Galatians did not mean he was placing women in a position of equality with men in the sense that they could take authority over men or teach the Body of Christ.

It is said that this relates only to the marriage relationship—husbands and wives. But the context is proper conduct within the assembly of believers. It may also have a husband-wife connotation, but that is secondary to the assembly connotation.

It is also suggested that the reason Paul said that women should learn in silence with all subjection is because in the synagogue men and women were separated and wives would shout to their husbands across the room, asking questions about what was being taught, thus causing disorder.

There are a number of problems with this suggestion.

First, there is no scriptural or empirical historical evidence to support this claim. No one can trace its origins. Some commentators have suggested it, and it has been passed down through recent times in order to support the idea of women teachers.

Second, Paul was addressing the assembly of believers in Jesus, not the Jewish synagogue. At the time, believers met in homes around a common meal. There is no scriptural evidence or historical precedent to say the men and women were separated in those house meetings.

Third, the issue of keeping silence and learning with subjection is tied to teaching and taking authority over the assembly.

We know that women may pray and prophesy in the assembly, so it does not necessarily address the idea that women may not on occasion express how God's Word has touched them in some way. It merely forbids women to assume the role of teacher, even for a short time, or to take authority over the men.

But if a woman does share some truth on occasion, she should take care that she not segue into teaching mode. If she does, she should welcome correction from the male leadership.

Did Paul have the same authority as Jesus?

Then there is the protest that Paul's words are not equal to the words of Jesus, so he had no authority to prohibit women from teaching and from taking authority over men. But can we really separate the words of Jesus and the words of Paul?

When Paul wrote under the anointing of God, his words were and still are as authoritative as if God Himself were present to speak them. That is how His Word was given—through inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

God's Word tells us that two witnesses establish His truth. In Paul's case, both Luke and Peter bore witness to Paul's authority as an apostle to speak and write the Word of God. Luke testifies to Paul's calling as an apostle in numerous places throughout the Book of Acts; Peter calls Paul's letters "Scripture" (2 Peter 3:14-16).

If the apostle Paul did not allow women to take authority over men or to teach, who is anyone to think they can do so?

Are things not different today?

But, some will say, this is a different age. We're more enlightened today than Paul was in his day.

Enlightened by who or what? Has God's Word changed? No. It is the world that tells us we no longer need be bound by God's Word in these (and many other) matters.

The audacity to think that we can discard any part of God's Word simply because it doesn't suit our "enlightened" thinking. This is Christian humanism—a mixture of human wisdom with "Christian" thinking influenced by liberation theology.

Wasn't Eve equal to Adam?

Paul's reason for prohibiting women from teaching or from taking authority over men is based on eternal truths:

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (1 Timothy 2:13-14)

The natures of men and women have not changed. Eve's submission to Adam did not occur as a result of Adam's fall. Adam was created first, then Eve was taken from Adam to be Adam's helper. Popular teachers tell us that they enjoyed total equality; that Adam had no authority over Eve because she was his equal. But that cannot be found anywhere in Scripture. It is ill-founded feminist conjecture that has incurred many ungodly problems within the Body of Christ.

It was after the fall that women would seek equality with men. And that rebellious spirit is evident not only in today's society, but in today's churches. It is the spirit of Jezebel—the same attitude that the wife of Israel's king Ahab possessed, and of which the Lord warns the assembly in Thyatira:

“Notwithstanding, I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her room to repent of her fornication, and she did not repent.

“Look! I will cast her and those who commit adultery with her into a bed, into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

“And I will kill her children with death, and all the assemblies shall know that I am He who searches the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works.” (Revelations 2:20-23)

Do today’s popular women teachers cause the saints to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols? Perhaps not in the physical sense, but certainly in the spiritual sense they do.

How is this so? Because they lead believers astray to believe that God’s Word has no meaning insofar as their “ministries” are concerned. By enticing people to follow after them, these women teachers are drawing God’s people away from His anointed Word toward their feminized concept of God. Their god is not the God of the Bible, even if they cite Scripture to describe Him, and even if some of their descriptions are accurate. If there is any difference—even the most minute difference—between the god of some false teacher, man or woman, then the god to which they are referring is not the God of the Bible.

Understand that when Aaron had the Israelites give their gold to the cause of building the golden calf in the wilderness, he built an altar for it and proclaimed that the next day would be a feast to Yahweh (Exodus 32:5).

People are quick to fashion their own god and call it “Jesus,” “Yahweh,” or “the Father,” when in truth their god is at best only a partial representation of the true God, and more often than not a distorted image of the true God.

This is true of the feminized concept of God that women teachers are prone to assert. Jesus is spoken of in “love terms” as a lover who wants only to give perpetual joy and abundant lives. It is a gospel suited primarily for the affluent West where many women are addicted to romance novels and focus on feelings and their need for security.

That feminized gospel has truth to it, but it skews the nature of Jesus to that of a lover while largely displacing Him as the Lion of the tribe of Judah who will come with flaming judgment against all who oppose His truth or hold His truth in unrighteousness (Revelations 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-11).

The feminized gospel permeates today’s churches and has resulted in women taking control over every aspect of ministry. Churches offer weekly Bible studies for women while limiting the fellowship of the men to at best a once-a-month “prayer breakfast.” There are very few churches that offer concerted teaching of Scripture to men alone as they do for women alone. For those that do, my hope is that their teaching is solid truth.

Pastors don’t dare tell the women in their congregations not to listen to women teachers (or for that matter to popular male teachers who are untrustworthy). The first duty of the CEO of most churches is to make sure the tithes and offerings come in

to support the corporation. For that to happen they know they must not rock the boat. And who do they fear the most? The men? No. They fear the women. They have become emasculated, and they are allowing their corporations to become emasculated.

If they even dare touch Ephesians 5:22-24 or Colossians 3:18, they make light of those Scriptures and are quick to turn the tables on the husbands even to the point of ridicule.

In essence, they end up placing the husbands under the thumbs of their wives.

What about women in the Bible who teach?

There are no examples in the Bible of women who teach in the assembly. The only place where a woman is authorized to teach is found in Titus 2:1-5:

But you, speak the things that become sound doctrine so that the aged men are sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.

The aged women, likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things so that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, so that the word of God is not blasphemed.

The elder women are to teach the younger women (and I would say any unlearned women today) how to live holy lives—to be good wives and mothers, to take care of their homes, and (horrors!) to be obedient to their husbands.

There is nothing in Scripture that allows women to teach God’s Word generally to anyone, including women. Teaching for the Body of Christ is to be in the hands of anointed men; no woman is anointed to teach the Body of Christ, whether in the local assembly or via the Christian media, including publishing books or through speaking engagements.

May a woman address an assembly of young women to teach them the things delineated above in Titus 2:1-5? There is no reason why not. But to go beyond that is unscriptural.

Now, for women who are isolated for a season due to their location or circumstances, they should certainly join with whom-ever they can to pray and study Scripture together, even if it is only with one or two other women.

What about Priscilla?

Some appeal to the account of Aquila and Priscilla. They say that Priscilla taught Apollos, and besides that, she is sometimes named before her husband Aquila, suggesting this is proof that she had pre-eminence over him. Let’s see what Acts 18:24-26 says:

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and strong in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord and, being fervent in the spirit, he spoke and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue—whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him to themselves, and expounded to him the way of God more perfectly.

Aquila and Priscilla saw that Apollos was on to the truth, and they both helped him understand the truth more fully.

The idea that Priscilla had precedence over Aquila because she is named first in a few other Scriptures holds no water, because in this case—the only instance where teaching of any kind is addressed—Aquila is mentioned first. Besides that, on a one-to-one basis, a woman may explain the Scriptures to an unlearned young man, particularly as an aid to her husband's ministry, and she can certainly witness of God's grace for salvation to any non-believing man. No problem there. But this doesn't give leave to assume the role of teacher to the Body of Christ.

The three times that Priscilla is mentioned before Aquila are in social situations. Luke mentions Priscilla first in Acts 18:18 as accompanying Paul on his journey to Syria. In the other two cases, Paul tells the Romans to "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus" (Romans 16:3), and he tells Timothy to "Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus" (2 Timothy 4:19).

The other three times, Aquila is mentioned first. Those who wish to promote the idea of women teachers focus on the three times Priscilla is mentioned first as "proof" that she had pre-eminence over Aquila, but neglect the equal number of times Aquila is mentioned first, especially in teaching Apollos. Mentioning Priscilla first in a greeting or any social setting was merely an act of courtesy, deferring to the woman much as today's emcees address audiences as "Ladies and gentlemen."

In any case, these are no viable Scriptures to allow for women to teach or to take authority over men.

Didn't Deborah have authority over King Barak?

No, she didn't. Deborah was a prophetess and judge of Israel who brought God's Word to Barak that he should go to war with Sisera. Barak's courage failed him unless Deborah went with him to bring to him God's counsel. As a result, Deborah shared in the credit for Barak's victory. But Barak remained the king. He could have rejected Deborah's prophetic counsel, but he didn't. He failed in that he did not trust God to be with him without God's prophetess by his side. Of utmost importance, the writer of Hebrews does not credit Deborah for the victory; he credits Barak:

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets who through faith subdued kingdoms, did righteous works, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions... (Hebrews 11:32-33)

Why does God's Word acknowledge Barak and not Deborah? Because Barak was the leader of Israel, not Deborah. She did not lead the troops; Barak did. Had Barak told the troops not to go to battle they would have obeyed him as their king. Deborah was a "mother" to Israel. But God never ordained that a woman would be the supreme ruler. The only "queen" of Israel was Jezebel who usurped the leadership and paid the price for it.

Insisting that Deborah accompany him in battle was Barak's failing; it did not lay the groundwork for women to teach or to take authority over men. In truth, it is a sign of God's curse upon any people when women rule:

Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given to him.

As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O My people, those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths.

YHWH stands up to plead, and stands to judge the people. (Isaiah 3:11-13)

If it is a curse upon Israel for women to rule, then it is just as much a curse upon the Body of Christ for women to rule. Why? Because the Body of Christ is part of Israel, grafted into Israel's New Covenant relationship with the Lord Jesus. His covenant was not with "the Church." It was with the houses of Judah and Israel (Jeremiah 31:31; Hebrews 8:8). Yahweh never gave women authority over Israel except some judges when Israel was in sin. What a sad testimony to justify women ruling.

Deborah's role as judge was evidence of Israel's weakness and sinfulness at the time. It was not God's best for Israel. Those who use Deborah as an example are appealing to a lack of ability on the part of men to fulfill their calling as leaders. It is not God's will that women rule over men; when that happens it is evidence of His judgment.

What if a husband grants permission to teach?

Some women have been given permission by their husbands (or pastors) to teach. But no man—husband or pastor—has the authority to abrogate God's Word by permitting women to teach. Such men are in rebellion against the Lord.

Some popular women teachers even have their husbands working for them, thus placing those women in authority over their husbands.

What about changed lives?

But what about the lives that have been changed through the teaching of women? Isn't that proof that they are anointed by God?

Not in the least. Even the Devil can teach truth if it can be used to deceive in conjunction with a greater lie. God honors His Word no matter who speaks it. It is His Word that is anointed, not the teacher, although some male teachers are anointed (chosen) to teach.

False prophets often produce good results outwardly. But they are still false prophets.

The Lord wants us to keep our eyes on His truth, not on outward works:

For there will arise false christs and false prophets, and they will show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works?' And then I will say to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work wickedness. (Matthew 7:21-23)

How many Christians today would be able to stand firm for God's Truth were they to encounter such deceptions? Even

without those lying signs and wonders the vast majority of Christians are following false teachers, both men and women.

There are no arguments, whether from Scripture or from human reasoning, that allow for a woman to teach or take authority in the Body of Christ and remain faithful to Scripture.

May women teach children, including boys?

Scripture doesn't say one way or the other about women teaching children in the assembly of believers. Certainly women can teach their own children. But God's command to keep His Word alive within the family are given to husbands and fathers. Whether or not women can teach little children is not addressed, but once a boy reaches puberty he has become a man and must be taught by men. When young men are taught by women they are being deprived of their passage into manhood within the Body of Christ, both physically and spiritually. Men are responsible for conveying the oracles of God to others, especially boys and young men.

The concept of separating congregations into peer groups, including Sunday school classes for children, is not a scriptural method for teaching, although neither is it forbidden. Children can learn by osmosis as they grow from infancy into adulthood, hearing the Word of God proclaimed within the assembly. If a child is too unruly and disrupts the meeting, then he should be taken outside until he learns to behave. In time, with prayer and trust in the Lord, any child should be able to handle the meeting.

We have certainly seen this to be the case in the house assemblies we attend. But the responsibility is upon the parents to do all they can to raise their children to be respectful of others.

A sin against nature?

We find a predominance of women teachers in the more liberal churches, especially those that call themselves "inclusive," meaning open not only to homosexual and lesbian members, but leaders in the congregations. This doesn't of itself negate the idea of women teachers, but I would say that God has formed nature itself to equip only men for the task of teaching. Generally, men's voices convey authority; women's voices lack authority. There are exceptions in both cases, but those exceptions are most often tied to an abundance of or lack of the male hormone testosterone in either the man or woman.

Yet even the authoritative voice of a man does not guarantee truth. Throughout history there have been far more false teachers from among men than from among women, mainly because historically women have not been allowed to teach in the assemblies. So regardless of the source, we must ask ourselves, do we wish to hear those anointed by God, or someone (man or woman) who merely has the gift of gab? ❖



(Continued from
page 14)

Therefore I want you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit.

If these people are calling Jesus "Lord," they must be anointed by the Holy Spirit of God., Right?

When Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians there was a sharp delineation between believers and non-believers, especially among the Jews. Pagans as well rejected Jesus and persecuted those among them who came to believe in Him. At that time, no one would dare call Jesus their Lord unless they were true believers, willing to risk their lives, their honor and their fortunes for Him. In this day and age when Jesus has become fashionable for pragmatic reasons, anyone may say "Jesus is Lord." They may even believe that He is Lord, but not be speaking about the same Jesus as He of the Bible.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes proclaims another Jesus, whom we have not proclaimed, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not received, you might well bear with him.

I recall seeing a car many years ago, before the ecumenical spirit overtook evangelical Christianity. It had two bumper stickers. One read, "Jesus is Lord." The other read, "Read the Book of Mormon."

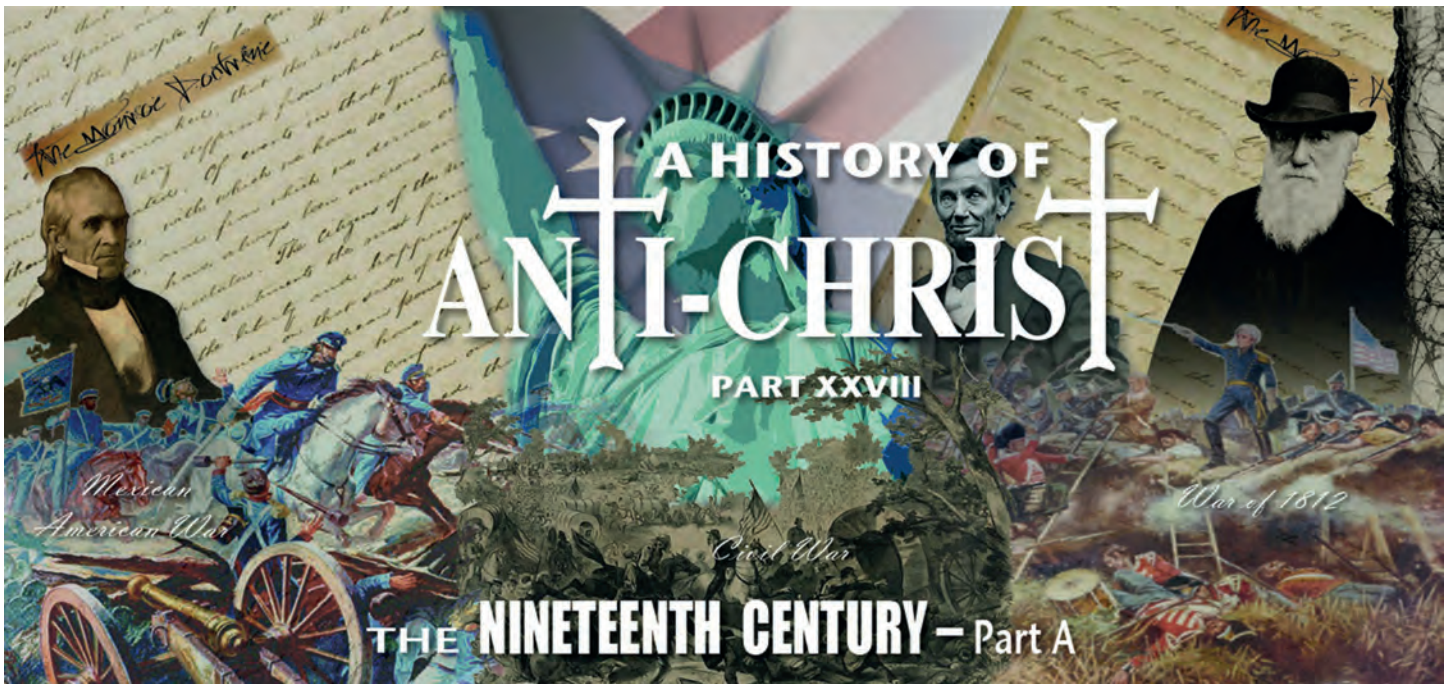
The day will certainly come when it may again be true that no one can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. When persecution comes from the anti-Christ world, those willing to compromise with the world in order to get the world to "accept Jesus" or to merely clean up its act will be among the first to tear off the bumper stickers and remove the clothing that advertises Him as their Lord.

The mandate of the Great Commission is not to clean up Satan's domain. As the adage goes, you can put lipstick on a pig, and what you will have is a pig with lipstick. Rather, we are to proclaim to individuals the Gospel of the Kingdom which is the expectation of the Lord's physical return to establish His righteous rule over the earth with His bodily resurrected saints. The Gospel is good news to those who repent of their sins and separate themselves from the ungodly elements of the world.

To work for anything other than the Gospel of the coming Kingdom of Christ, including attempts to take over of the world system, is tilting at windmills.

Worse, it is leading believers into the great deception of the last days. ❖

We should not try to be something we are not in the Body of Christ. Rather, we should build on the spiritual gifts that the Lord has bestowed upon us.



THE NINETEENTH CENTURY brought tremendous changes not only in man's science and technology, particularly in the West, but in beliefs. By the end of the eighteenth century the Enlightenment began to give way to a new era of Romanticism, an intellectual movement that started in Germany around 1770 and impacted art and literature. Although the effects of the Enlightenment remained, producing greater accomplishments in science and industry, Romanticism's ideas found fertile ground among those dissatisfied with the pragmatism of science and technology. Reacting against the Industrial Revolution, artists and literary figures appealed to the emotions, particularly as they could be turned against the social and political norms of the aristocratic era.

Romanticism's effect on theology was especially significant, reflecting the influence of anti-Christ. Led by German theologians such as Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albrecht Ritschl, Christianity in particular took on a radical departure from the reasoned faith of the true believer in Jesus.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (November 21, 1768 – February 12, 1834) was a German theologian, philosopher and biblical scholar influential in the development of Higher Criticism which formed the basis for liberal theology—a method of hermeneutics that rejects tenets of biblical truth having to do with God's intervention in His creation. Because of his great influence on Christian thought, he is called the "Father of Modern Liberal Theology."

Albrecht Ritschl, (March 25, 1822 – March 20, 1889), another German theologian, rejected the doctrines of original sin, the miraculous birth of Christ, the Trinity, and the Incarnation. He was heavily influenced by Immanuel Kant, and attempted to apply the tenets of Kantian philosophy to Protestant Christianity. It is said that this was typical of an era that had little feeling for the mystery of religion and no dread of a divine judgment.

Both of these men's influence on Protestant theology has been enormous, and is felt even to this day as Higher Criticism

has permeated even elements of evangelical Christianity with subjective, feelings-oriented religion.

Anti-Christ knows full well that the vast majority of people act more on emotion than on reason—particularly on a reasoned faith. The subjectivity of religious thinking has opened the doors for Satan to incorporate the dialectic process to challenge the absolute truths of God's Word. Pitting subjective religious lies against the absolutes of Scripture, he influences men to "dialogue" with those whose beliefs are in opposition to those absolutes, seeking to reach synthesis—a "meeting of the minds" that seems to bring at least an "agreement to disagree" while hindering any effective proclamation of the truth. This is why today we have evangelical Christian leaders dialoging with Roman Catholic theologians, Mormon leaders and even Muslim imams to reach a harmonized agreement not to convert anyone, but merely to embrace the similarities between the religions. Thus, they can pray together, even though it is to different false gods.

Amid the changing philosophical landscape, nations continued on the path to warfare, each century becoming bloodier than the previous one. Warfare between Christian states accelerated, as did conflict between the Muslim Ottoman Empire and Western and Eastern Europe. In 1800, the Acts of Union annexed Ireland into the British Empire, creating the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The Union with Ireland Act 1800 was enacted by the Parliament of Great Britain on July 2, 1800, and was followed by the Act of Union (Ireland) 1800, passed by the Parliament of Ireland on August 1, 1800, resulting in the Union coming into effect on January 1, 1801. These Acts have bound the two countries together for better and for worse, and much bloodshed has resulted as militant elements in Catholic Northern Ireland have struggled for independence from Protestant England from the early part of the 20th century till today.

1804 saw the uprising of Serbs against the rule of the Ottomans, which brought about the modern state of Serbia.

The revolt was prompted by the massacre of many Serbian noblemen by the Dahias, a Janissary junta that ruled Serbia at the time. The Janissaries—an elite military force of Christians conscripted from a young age into service for the Ottoman Empire—executed the nobles out of fear that the Serbs would support a rival sultan who opposed their increasing power in his province. The Serb revolt was among the first stirrings against the Ottoman Empire that found success.

Eventually, the Ottoman Empire would succumb to greater challenges by Western powers, as we'll see in our next installment.

Anti-Christ's power over the slave trade suffered greatly when slavery was abolished in the West, beginning with the British Empire. The earliest accounts of anti-slavery efforts trace to around 1783 when the Quaker movement petitioned the British Parliament to end the slave trade. The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was established in London in May, 1787, which produced literature and art to bring to the general populace a greater awareness of the evil. In 1805, a Bill calling for the abolition of the slave trade in British territories passed both Houses of Parliament. By 1807, some 40 parliamentary seats were held by anti-slave-trade proponents led by William Wilberforce. But slavery continued to flourish in other countries, most notably the United States of America.

Anti-Christ has no problem goading Christian nations to war against one another. As the implements of warfare grew increasingly sophisticated, large naval arsenals became the staple of nations determined to control the seas in the interest of commerce. From 1803 to 1806, the War of the Third Coalition resulted in France under Napoleon defeating an alliance comprised of Austria, Russia, and some allied nations.

During that war, Britain was also under constant threat from France. On October 21, 1805, the Royal Navy engaged a combined naval force of France and Spain at the Battle of Trafalgar. Under the command of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, 27 British ships decisively defeated 33 French and Spanish ships led by French Admiral Pierre-Charles Villeneuve. Although Nelson was mortally wounded in the battle, the victory gave Britain absolute mastery over the seas. This allowed Britain to greatly expand her influence throughout the world. This led to yet another opportunity for anti-Christ to create warfare between Christian nations as Britain attempted to restrict U.S. trade, resulting in the War of 1812.

The United States suffered several defeats as it struggled against a combined force of British, Canadian and American Indian forces. In August, 1814, Washington, D.C. was captured, and the nation's capital was burned. Yet American forces successfully resisted British invasions of New York, Baltimore and New Orleans. The United States was able to survive what it called its "Second War of Independence."

Desirous of maintaining that independence, and in response to continued European attempts to colonize land and influence states in North and South America, the United States adopted the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. The Doctrine deemed such interference on the part of European nations toward any state in the Americas acts of aggression which would be met with military intervention.

The Doctrine was first proposed by President James Monroe during his seventh annual State of the Union Address to Congress. It remains one of the longest-standing tenets of U.S. foreign policy.

The U.S. Government's expansionist goals led to more bloodshed under the presidency of James K. Polk who believed in the doctrine of America's "Manifest Destiny." Manifest Destiny posited that the United States was destined by God to spread the virtues of the American people and their institutions westward to encompass the entire continent. Although Manifest Destiny never gained universal support either among the American people or politicians, its ultimate goal was realized piecemeal.

The origin of its first theme, "the virtue of the American people and their institutions" can be traced to America's puritan heritage and John Winthrop's sermon titled, "City upon a Hill," in which he proposed that America would be a shining example to the Old World.

Regardless of the virtues or failings of the United States of America, it cannot be denied that God has used it in such a way that Manifest Destiny would seem to be His plan. Even so, anti-Christ has found ways throughout history to thwart the good intentions of men, and create evil in their place.

The Mexican-American War (1846-1848) was one evil consequence of Manifest Destiny. After Texas gained independence from Mexico in 1836, the United States initially declined to incorporate it into the union, largely because northern political interests did not want to add a new slave state. Hoping to retake Texas, the Mexican government was at the time conducting border raids and threatening war should the United States annex Mexico. With the election of Polk in 1844, his belief in Manifest Destiny drove him to campaign for the annexation of Texas, with further designs to bring the Oregon Territory, California, New Mexico, and the entire southwestern portion of the continent into the Union.

At first, Polk offered to buy the lands from Mexico, but when his offer was rejected he instigated a fight by moving U.S. troops into a disputed zone between the Rio Grande and Nueces River—an area recognized by both the U.S. and Mexico as part of the Mexican state of Coahuila. This prompted an attack by Mexican cavalry against a contingency of U.S. troops under the command of General Zachary Taylor on April 25, 1846. The attack spurred Polk to petition Congress to declare war against Mexico, which it did on May 13 of the same year. The Mexican forces were no match against the superior armed strength of the U.S. army, and Mexico surrendered under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. This established the Rio Grande as the U.S.-Mexican border, and Mexico recognized the U.S. annexation of Texas. Mexico also agreed to sell California and the territory that would become the states of New Mexico and Arizona as well as the rest of its territory north of the Rio Grande for \$15 million plus the assumption of certain damages claims.

Again, anti-Christ had fomented warfare between "Christian" nations—the largely Protestant United States, and Roman Catholic Mexico, under the pretense that it was God's will for the spread of a "New Earth" in the regions of the North American continent.

We recognize that God indeed is the one who establishes all power on earth. But as believers in Jesus Christ, we must not embroil ourselves in the conflicts fomented by anti-Christ, whom God uses to bring about His plans.

In spite of Polk's ambitious plans to bring about a "New Earth" on the North American continent, anti-Christ was stirring up conflict among the inhabitants of the nation. With the election of the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, and amid fears that he would push for the abolition of slavery in the United States (he stated in his campaign that "Government cannot endure permanently half slave, half free"), several southern states seceded from the Union. South Carolina was the first to secede, on December 20, 1860. Within two months, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas followed. On February 9, 1861, the secessionist states formed The Confederate States of America with Jefferson Davies as president.

After Lincoln was sworn into office (March 4, 1861), he kept the U.S. garrison stationed at Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Although several U.S. forts had been attacked prior, the U.S. government did not at first initiate retaliation. But when the Confederates under General Pierre Beauregard opened fire on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861, the War of Secession (commonly misnamed "the Civil War"), began. This war remains the most devastating ever fought on U.S. soil, and its casualties of dead and wounded Americans—both military and civilian—are still unmatched by those of all military conflicts in the nation's history (including World Wars I and II) combined (750,000 - 698,500). In numbers of American military deaths, the American Civil War ranks second only to World War II. But consider that the population of the United States (including the Confederate states) at the beginning of the Civil War was merely 31,443,000 compared to 133,402,000 at the beginning of World War II.

Truly, the American Civil War was anti-Christ's greatest achievement in union with the angel of death against any "Christian" nation.

And his onslaught continued throughout the 19th century with constant warfare in "Christian" Europe: 1864 - Prussia and Austria invaded Denmark; 1866 - Austro-Prussian War began; 1870 - Franco-Prussian War started; 1898 - Spanish-American War.

Anti-Christ has many fronts on which he fights his battles. One of his greatest goals is to discredit faith in Jesus Christ and erect barriers to those who might otherwise be won to true faith. The fomenting of atrocities by alleged Christians against heathens has been one of his most effective means to achieve that purpose. The manner in which the government of this "Christian" nation acted against aboriginal people has caused many to reject "the white man's God." Broken treaties that promised land and benefits to American Indians have been a blot on the record of American domestic policy. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, enacted into law by President Andrew Jackson, was supposed to grant unsettled lands west of the Mississippi River to Indians in exchange for their lands within existing state borders. Although the move west by Indian tribes was deemed "voluntary," in fact they were forced from their lands under

pressure by European settlers placed on Congress and the president. During the removal, some 4,000 Cherokee died on a forced march, which came to be known as the "Trail of Tears."

Major tribes such as the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek and Seminole were most affected, although the Seminole resisted. This resulted in the Second Seminole War of 1835, during which Chief Osceola was taken prisoner while under a flag of truce.

During the campaigns conducted by the U.S. Government against the Indian nations, atrocities were committed on both sides. Scalping, decapitation, the killing of innocent women and children were part and parcel of both. In the end, though, it is always faith in Jesus that suffers because so many who go by His name fall victim to their own avarice.

In 1837, Queen Victoria assumed the British throne, and would have the longest reign of any British monarch in history, from June 20, 1837, until her death on January 22, 1901. Victoria was known for her strict moral standards, and for her desire to reign over the kingdom's foreign territories with benevolence, employing military action only when necessary to maintain control. She felt that others might not be as benevolent were the Crown to cede control to any others.

In 1886, France, an ally of the United Colonies during the Revolutionary War, presented the United States with the Statue of Liberty. A revered icon of American independence, pride and resolve to remain a free and independent state (that's all gone), the Statue of Liberty, made in the style of ancient Greek and Roman art, was actually inspired by the Roman goddess *Libertas* (Latin for "Liberty"). The U.S. National Parks Service states that the Roman robe on the Statue of Liberty is the main feature that invokes *Libertas* and the symbol of Liberty for which she stood. In Roman religion, *Libertas* was the female personification of liberty and personal freedom. Although there is no official statement from the National Parks Service, or reliable historical sources, the spikes on Liberty's head are similar to those depicted on the sun gods Apollo (Roman) and Helios (Greek). The statue's original name was "Liberty Enlightening the World." Hence the torch in her right hand.

Although the United States of America is thought of by many Christians as a "Christian nation," anti-Christ has seen to it that there would be many pagan and occult symbols associated with it, and with many of the states, counties and cities. It should be clear to any born-again believer in Jesus that the nation is as much a part of Satan's world system as any other nation. The difference, by God's grace, is that the influence of His Word has until fairly recently held sway in the hearts of many of its citizens. But that, too, is fast fading as the last days' apostasy continues to gain ground.

Science and technology brought the invention of photography with the first daguerrotype by French artist Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre in 1839. Like all of man's technology, photography would be used for the benefit of men and anti-Christ far more than for the glory of God. Whereas prior to photography, pornography took great pains to produce through art and sculpture, now it would be a matter of pushing a button. History gives ample evidence of the proliferation of obscene images has captured a major segment of the photography business.

Photography led to motion pictures, video tape, and digital video discs, all of which have been used profusely for propaganda and pornography. But the noble use of these inventions have bestowed much pleasure and even work for the Lord.

The 19th-century inventions of the telephone, the phonograph (both by Alexander Graham Bell) and automobiles have had mixed results, some very good, some very bad. Certainly automobiles, even with the many benefits they provide, have contributed to the early deaths of millions of people since their invention.

Phonographs led to tape, to compact discs, and currently to streaming music and other audio content via the Internet. Today's "music" is more of a curse than a benefit, and much of it is obscene. Yet how wonderful it is to listen to good music that glorifies God.

In addition to the telephone, another invention that has helped anti-Christ bring the world closer in his design to recreate Babel on a global scale is the telegraph. Although a crude telegraph system was invented in Bavaria by Samuel Soemmering in 1809, and in 1828 in the U.S. by Harrison Dyar, it is Samuel Morse who is credited with the first truly practical telegraph using an electromagnet. Morse, a professor of arts and design at New York University, demonstrated that electronic signals could be transmitted by wire using pulses of current to deflect an electromagnet which moved a marker to produce written codes on a strip of paper. Thus was invented Morse Code. On May 24, 1844, Samuel Morse officially opened the first completed line of telegraph wires which stretched between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., some 40 miles, with the words, "What hath God wrought?"

In truth, it was man who wrought the invention by unlocking the secrets of nature created by God. Yet, even as anti-Christ takes advantage of man's moral failings to use such inventions for his own purposes, we must acknowledge that none of this could happen except God permit it. His permission serves to prove the prophecies of His Word:

"But you, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end. Many shall run back and forth, and knowledge shall be increased." (Daniel 12:4)

Within 23 years (1867), the first trans-Atlantic cable would be laid, linking Europe and the United States in an even further stretch to achieve the new Babel.

Even as these inventions appealed to the sin nature of mankind, some noble achievements were made in the area of science, particularly in the field of medicine. Louis Pasteur, a French chemist and microbiologist, achieved many successful advances against numerous diseases because of his understanding of germs. The discovery of x-rays in 1895 has also contributed to the cure of diseases, as did Marie Currie's discovery of radium.

In the field of art, realism—the painting and sculpture of natural elements as created by God—gave way to human imagination. Impressionist art began to take on appeal with the works of Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and Sisley, who, in 1873, organized the *Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes Peintres Sculpteurs, Graveurs* ("Cooperative and Anonymous Association of Paint-

ers, Sculptors, and Engravers"). Although impressionism maintained a loose connection with realism, the trend away from pure realism that it began eventually led to abstract art, cubism and even "art" painted by animals, which may command obscene prices from spiritually-challenged but wealthy patrons of today's art scene. Anti-Christ hates anything that glorifies God, and desires to twist reality into forms identifiable with devilish influences.

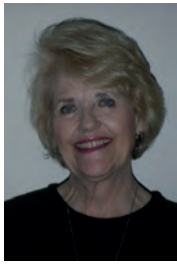
And speaking of devilish influences, a number of people who would become prominent anti-Christians in their own right were born during the 19th century, most notably, Charles Darwin (1809); Oscar Wilde (1854); Sigmund Freud (1856); Mohandas Gandhi (1869) and Jack the Ripper (?). On July 1, 1804, French novelist Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin was born. Using the pseudonym George Sand, Dupin authored many novels that expressed her feminist, socialist and other unconventional views that appealed to the fallen nature of men and women. A notorious adulteress who preferred men's clothing to that of women, her writings began a revolution in contemporary thinking that have burgeoned over the past century into today's feminist movement, which has wormed its way into a vast majority of churches throughout the world. Anti-Christ's design to blend the genders and confuse the male-female natures created by God has found fertile ground in man's imagination, greatly aided by Dupin.

In a different type of fiction, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, in which his theory of the evolution of man from lower species took the scientific world by storm. This was followed by the publishing of his *Descent of Man* in 1871. It isn't necessary to elaborate on the infamous theory of evolution that has turned even many professed Christians away from the biblical account of the creation of man by God. This theory remains one of the benchmarks of anti-Christ's achievements over the past 6,000 years of man's history.

On the social front, many of today's Christmas traditions began in the 19th century, including the invention of Santa Claus, Christmas trees, Santa's eight reindeer, each with a distinctive name (not including Rudolph). Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* was published in 1843, and has never been out of print.

Although the origins of Valentine's Day remain shrouded in history (sometime in the Middle Ages romantic partners were chosen on "Saint Valentine's" Day because it was believed that birds began mating on that day, it wasn't until the 19th century that the commercialization of that day developed with the tradition of Valentine's Day cards. Popular in Europe, the Valentine's Day card industry began in America with a student at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, Esther A. Howland. Students at Mount Holyoke often secretly exchanged poems scrawled on sheets of paper. After her graduation, Howland received an ornate card from an English business associate of her father, a stationer. Having considerable artistic talent and business acumen, Howland had the idea of producing professional cards and selling them in her father's store. From there, the industry grew in the United States to what it is today. ❖

NEXT: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY - PART II



Jean's Turn Christ's Sufferings

By Jean Dager

Rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. 1 Peter 4:13

I READ A THOUGHT provoking article by the late David Wilkerson on the subject of Christ's sufferings. He talked about how we mostly identify the physical sufferings Jesus endured on the cross with the physical and temporal sufferings of the saints. He stated that there is nothing wrong with this, but we seldom identify with the *spiritual* sufferings He endured, such as when He confronted the money changers in the temple. He talked about the similarity of how much commercialism goes on in churches today in the selling of merchandise. I had never considered Christ's spiritual sufferings in this sense, but I now can see Wilkerson's point.

While attending the institutional churches much of our lives, we were suffering spiritually as we witnessed how much time was spent in entertaining the saints through various charismatic orators. As a result, people became devoted to the orator rather than to the Word of God. We believe the majority of believers attending the mega-churches today are misled by popular teachers. So much so, that they are unable to discern truth from error. Worship in music as well has largely devolved into entertaining the human soul rather than focusing on glorifying God. So we count ourselves blessed as we've attended house assemblies for the past 21 years!

It was very difficult to leave the brethren in our former assembly, but we remain in close contact with them. And since we moved, we have been blessed to meet in a simple way here in Sequim with two other assemblies of believers.

On a tragic note, we were shocked to learn that one of the brothers from our former assembly was tragically killed. His name was Lazaro, one of the most zealous brothers in the Lord that I've known. His ministry was primarily street evangelism which, as you undoubtedly know, is extremely difficult and not for everyone. But the Lord faithfully equipped him in this service. He survived many humiliating encounters with the public while witnessing in the streets.

His death was not as a result of street witnessing, but while protecting his sister from her boyfriend who is an illicit-drug user. This man pointed a gun at Lazaro's sister, and as Lazaro moved in front of her, he calmly began witnessing a salvation message to the man when he was suddenly shot. This is the first person I've known personally who has died for his faith. Lazaro had a heart for the unsaved. Now he is with his beloved Savior – hallelujah! He was well loved by his family and we surely won't forget him.

We are so grateful to all the saints who were faithfully praying for us during the turmoil of relocation. And we were so incredibly blessed by all the saints from our house assembly who gave countless hours of their time in helping us move. It was truly challenging! Thanks also to everyone who expressed their concern for us and for sending encouraging Scripture verses. May the Lord bless you. We trust that you'll let us know when you undergo trials so we, too, can pray. It is an honor for us to pray for the needs of the saints—whether physical or spiritual.

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Please think to pray for the salvation of Lazaro's sister, and for the man who shot Lazaro. He is in jail awaiting trial.

We never know when, or under what circumstances we may meet the Lord. May we be ready at all times. ❖

AGREE OR NOT

THIS BOOK PROMPTS READERS TO RETHINK SOME DEARLY-HELD TRADITIONS CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS AND ETERNITY.

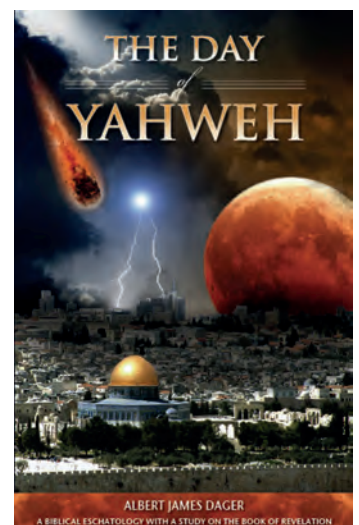
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