

Word-Faith Teaching - A Closer Look

Introduction:

The Word of Faith teaching, (sometimes called Hyper-Faith; Health/Wealth Gospel), is associated with such well known TV evangelists and teachers as Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Charles Capps, Robert Schuller, Robert Tilton, Oral Roberts, Yongi Cho, Norman Vincent Peale and Benny Hinn. Although Hagin is considered by many to be the father of this movement, it is Kenneth Copeland who appears to now hold centre stage. Much of Word-Faith teaching appears to be Bible based and orthodox. Their contribution to missions cannot be doubted. However, what do they really teach? Is their doctrine orthodox or heretical? Why have several evangelical theologians opposed the Word of Faith teaching? Indeed, until recent times even the Charismatic church considered the Word of Faith teaching to be extreme in the least and heresy at the worse. In 1980 the Assembly of God in USA, issued a statement against the Word of Faith movement titled '*The Believer and Positive Confession*'. However, in recent times observers have noted that many Charismatic and Pentecostal churches are now endorsing the Word of Faith movement.

One thing is certain, leaders like Copeland appear to despise doctrine. Copeland says: '*Don't give me doctrine!...Doctrine divides us; it's a waste of time...*' (1) This statement of course defies the scriptures that continually emphasise good doctrine, (eg. Rom.16:17; 2Tim4:2,3; Tit.2:1; etc). Why is it that the Word-Faith teachers do not want to stress doctrine? Why have they consistently refused to be challenged and corrected in doctrinal matters?

Roots:

The roots of the Word Faith (W.F.) movement are clearly traced to two sources. The first is the Metaphysical Mindsciences and the second is the Success/Motivation Movement. The term 'metaphysics' refers '*to those systems of religious thought which say that all reality and causality in life is 'above the physical'; the spiritual realm is the only true reality and is the cause of every effect in the physical realm. Although they vary greatly in belief, most metaphysical systems also teach that man must use his spiritual faculties (his mind) to control and create his own reality*' (2)

Metaphysics play a large part in the beliefs of Hinduism, the New Age and the Mind Sciences. The metaphysical cult teachings were originally derived from Mary Eddy Baker (Christian Science), then picked up by Kenyon, and later carried along by the W.F. teachers such as Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, Yongi Cho and others. The similarities of the Word-Faith beliefs and the Metaphysical sciences are well proven in the book '*A Different Gospel*' by D.R. McConnell. This book shows clearly the roots, as well as the blatant plagiarism of Kenyons' works by Kenneth Hagin. (3) Several examples of this plagiarism, where sections of Kenyons works were copied word for word, are cited in '*A Different Gospel*' by McConnell, (p.8,9). One author states: '*I have not seen anything in the Word of Faith that is not also in metaphysics except tongues and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit*'. (4)

Mary Eddy Baker, being at the root of the metaphysical sciences, claimed that illnesses were a product of incorrect thinking and that one could get rid of symptoms by visualising health. This is also clearly taught in the W.F. teaching. While the metaphysics speak much of *visualising*, the W.F. places more emphasis on *verbalising*. Many writers believe that the metaphysical mindsciences and the W.F. movement are basically rooted in Gnosticism. Gnosticism says there are three types of people: 1. Spiritual (*pneumatikoi*) 2. Soulsh (*psychikoi*), and 3. Carnal (*sarkikoi*). The Word-faith teachers essentially split man into three parts: body, soul and spirit. They say we are primarily a *spirit* that has a *soul* and we live in a *body*. These ideas were also taught by Oppollinaris, who was declared a heretic by the early church. Although there is some truth in the above W.F. ideas, it is not the full truth according to the scriptures. The Hebrew understanding of man is *wholistic* as in 1Thessalonians 5:23: '***And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ***'. 1Thessalonians 5:23 makes no such defined distinctions of the separate parts, as does the W.F. teaching, but rather says we are a tripartate being having a body, soul and a spirit as *one being*. Similarly the phrase '***a living soul***' (Gen.2:7), refers to the *whole* person. The W.F. teachers place great emphasis on the separate parts and especially the *spirit*. Hagin says: '*One almost has to by-pass the brain and operate from the inner man (the heart or spirit) to really get into the things of God*' (5) This emphasis on the heart or the spirit and de-emphasis on the mind, contradicts Mark 12:30: '***And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind...***' The Bible also says to '***...bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ***' (2Cor.10:5), and to monitor and control thoughts, (Is.26:3; Phil.4:8; Rom.12:1,2; Ps.19:14). Yet Copeland says: '*Believers are not to be led by logic*' and that we are not to figure things out mentally (6) but rather '*Instantly obey the voice of your spirit. Remember, God speaks to our spirit; he doesn't speak to our head or reasoning faculties*'. (7) This not only clearly contradicts scripture, (Acts 17:11 - The Bereans reasoned from the scriptures), but this W.F. teaching is cited by many writers as the Gnostic teaching of '*Dualism*', (or different kinds of knowledge), and '*anti-rationalism*', (the teaching that God-knowledge is not rational). As we shall prove, much of their 'God-knowledge' is obtained from visions or wrangling scriptures to fit a desired

(1) Preface in Gloria Copeland's '*God's will for you*', 1991.

(2) '*A Different Gospel*' by D.R. McConnell, P.28.

(3) Hagin copied most of his theology from Kenyon.

(4) '*Man as God: Word of faith movement*' by Rev. Curtis Crenshaw, P.78.

(5) '*Right and Wrong Thinking*' by Hagin, P.27.

(6) '*The force of faith*' by Copeland, P.6.

(7) '*The Human Spirit*' by Hagin, P.26.

teaching. The W.F. preaching and writings rarely continue in one passage of scripture for long. This is because the text would not prove what they are teaching. The leaders are masters at taking scriptures out of context and ignoring the scriptures that would obviously contradict their own teachings.

In regard to the success/motivation roots, Norman Vincent Peal and Robert Schuller are considered to be the forerunners and more recently Benny Hinn, Hagin, Copeland, Yongi Cho and others have carried it along. Norman Vincent Peale is recognised as the father of the modern 'Positive Confession' movement. This teaching says that we can engage certain laws to cause things to happen (or manifest) what we have verbalised. This '*new thought*' teaching which entered the church over 100 years ago was seen in the cult of *Christian Science* and the *Unity school*. It was opposed by the Christian church as heresy and cultish. However, today we have Yongi Cho saying: '*...he [Jesus] is bound by your lips and your words*', and the Charismatic author Samford says: '*God is a life force...we are part of God...He is in nature...*' The latter author gives four steps to tapping into the '*life force*': '*...Whatever you are, whatever you are come into me now*'. Despite the obvious occultish teaching of this author, high profile Charismatic leaders, such as John Wimber, have promoted her books. Because western society is very much selfish, materialistic and proud, the health-wealth Gospel of the W.F. teaching is bound to appeal to such a society. The success/motivation roots appeal to two basic instincts of man: *money* and *the love of power*. Is it any wonder that many writers regard much of the W.F. teaching as based in New Age and narcissism, (man turning towards self), because of the emphasis on *self* to get *power*. This is why Copeland can write a book titled '*How To Write Your Own Ticket With God*'.

Faith:

The W.F. teachers teach that God had to use His own faith to create, which means there is a law above Him. Does God need faith to create? '*The faith of God*' (1) is a scriptural phrase used by much W.F. teaching to emphasise faith as the *object*. However, a study in the Greek will show that the '*faith of God*' is another way of saying '*faith in God*'. The mistake here is that God Himself should be the object, not faith. The W.F. teaching teaches faith itself rather than the object of faith - God. In scripture, faith is gained by preaching the object of faith - Jesus Christ, (and His finished work on the cross, leading to the resurrection). The error is in teaching *faith in faith* rather than faith in God. This is exemplified in such publication titles as '*Having Faith in Your Faith*', by Hagin.

The logic of the faith teachers is similar to 1+1=3. Copeland says that since '*God is a faith being*' and man is '*a faith being*', man has the faith '*to operate in the same way that God operates*'. (2) This is only *part* truth and conveniently takes away from the sovereignty of God. The W.F. teachers use similar thinking to Luke Skywalker in the movie '*Star Wars*', where Luke learns how to manipulate the good side of a New Age type force. This is turning faith into a force and is essentially New Age teaching. The W.F. doctrine shows this force to be *controlled by laws* and *contained in words*. The emphasis is then on words that God said instead of God Himself. Capps writes: '*Words are the most powerful things in the universe*'. (3) But are these words more powerful than God Himself? It is this same 'force of faith' that caused three girls from Yongi Cho's church to drown when they attempted by 'faith' to cross a river by walking on water.

New Revelations, False Prophecies and Visions:

Jesus supposedly appeared to Hagin and gave him a formula for success, saying that one could '*write your own ticket to God*'.(4) When Jesus spoke this to Hagin, Hagin then demanded from Jesus proof from the Bible. Jesus apparently smiled and gladly obliged. Compare this with the men of the Bible who had appearances of Jesus or angels. They were all struck with *fear* or fell as if dead! In fact, after Jesus ascended he is only seen in his *glory*. Paul was blinded, John fell at his feet as dead, and Steven saw a fleeting vision. Yet Hagin, Copeland and Hinn have had armchair-like conversations with the living God! Hagin in fact, has had eight visitations from Jesus, each giving *new* teaching. Hagin even had a tour of Hell leaving his body by his spirit through his mouth..

The problem is, however, Jesus appears to each of the W.F. teachers giving *new revelation*, instructions and directions that are *different* to each of the other W.F. visionaries. Someone is lying! Many of the visions contradict scripture. Capps says that the Lord told him that the rich man of Isaiah 53:9, who buried Jesus, was not Joseph of Arimathea, but was the rich man in Luke Ch.16 who went to Hell! (5) Even a modest study of the Bible will show that this contradicts many scriptures, (e.g. Matt.27:57-60; Mk.15:42-47; Lk.23:50-56; Jn.19:38-42)! What spirits are really appearing to these men?

Copeland does not believe that Jesus believed himself to be God while on earth. (6) Jesus said to Copeland: '*Don't be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you are god...They crucified me for claiming that I was God. But I did not claim that I was God; I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in me. Hallelujah., that's what you are doing*'. (7) This defies not only scripture, but historical orthodox Christianity from the time of Jesus to the present. The two statements by this 'Jesus' are two heresies which the church has stood against for two thousand years. The deification of man and the casting of doubt as to the deity of Jesus are two heresies that have never been tolerated by the Christian church. The deity of Jesus alone is taught from dozens of scriptures throughout the Gospels, (in one Gospel alone the following references are cited: Jn.5:18,23; 8:58; 10:30; 14:9; 15:26; 20:28,29; etc.).

(1) This is called the objective genitive in Greek.

(2) '*The Force of Faith*', P.14.

(3) '*Gods Creative Power Will Work For You*'.

(4) '*How to Write Your Own Ticket to God*', P.5,20,21,23.

(5) '*Authority*', P.142.

(6) Correspondence with Christian Research Institute, CA., and cited in '*Agony of Deceit*' by Michael Horton, P.115.

(7) '*Take Time To Pray*', *believers Voice of Victory*, 8/88, P.9.

Several revelations or visions have proven to be in fact false prophecies. Oral Roberts had a conversation with a 900 ft. Jesus for seven hours and told him to build the 'City of Faith' hospital. God told him that if he did not raise the \$8 million dollars needed that he would kill him. This hospital was eventually built with only 30% of the beds occupied. It ended in bankruptcy!

In 1975 Copeland prophesied in the name of God: 'As we move into the month of January you shall see more of the outpouring of Gods glory than you've seen in the history of this world'. This part of the prophesy clearly failed. However, Copeland did not stop there. He continued: '...You will see the limbs that have been amputated put back on by the power of God. You will see it instantly done. You will see mens hair grow to full head of hair. You will see eyeballs replaced, where there are no eyeballs...' (1) Our question must be: what spirit is speaking to these men? In 1984 Hagin, speaking for God, prophesied: 'You wait till 87 comes. For thats the year that I'll join together streams of ministries that will flow mightily and great, and will cause the very earth to shake, will move heaven and stir Hell, and bring you to the blessings that God intended on the earth to bestow, and many who stand here today will remember, saith the Lord, that I told you so. Amen '(2) Again, we ask: what spirit is speaking to these men? Does God lie?

Deity of Christ; Deification of Man:

Kenneth Copeland says that Jesus spoke to him personally: 'Do not be disturbed when people accuse you of thinking you are God...the more you get like me, the more they are going to think that way of you. They crucified me for claiming that I was God. But I did not claim that I was God. I just claimed that I walked with Him and that he was in me. Hallelujah. That's what you are doing'. (3) Kenneth Copeland also writes: 'Pray to yourself, because I'm in yourself and you are in myself. We are one spirit, saith the Lord. You need to realise that you are not a spiritual schizophrenic - half God and half Satan - You are all God! Man had total authority to rule as God over every living creature on earth, and he was to rule by speaking words. You do not have a god in you - you are one! I say this and repeat it so it don't upset you too bad. When I read in the Bible; there He [Jesus] says, 'I am' I say 'yes, I am too"! (4) ...Dogs beget dogs, and cats beget cats, and God beget gods! (5)

As we have already seen, the Bible contradicts the statements above because it consistently portrays Jesus as God. Some attempted to stone Him because He claimed to be the 'I AM', (See Jn.5:18,23;8:58; 10:30; 14:9;15:26;20:28,29; etc).

The Mormon Church, a dangerous cult group, teaches that they are becoming *gods*. The above quotes also show clearly that the W.F. teachers teach that we *are gods*! Which teaching is worse? This was the same kind of lie that Satan used in the garden of Eden. The Bible says the Lord our God he is one, (Dt. 6:4). Unlike man God is sovereign, (Is.48:11; Ps.75:5; Eph.1:11; Dan.4:35,37) and *separate* to His creation.

Hagin says: 'Adam was the god of this world' (6) ..'Jesus was first divine, and then he was human. So he was in the flesh a divine-human being. I was first human, and so were you, but I was born of God, and so I became a human-divine being!...Thats who we are; we're Christ'. (7) From the above quotes we can see that not only do the W.F. teachers deify man but God is made to be *human*. In much of W.F. literature Jesus is seen as only a man while on earth. Hagin, for example, says: 'He was ministering on the earth as a human being...He ministered as a man...the same way we are to minister. (8)

Copeland says: 'Every man who has been born-again is an incarnation and Christianity is a miracle. The believer is as much an incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth' ...'You know sometimes people say to me,...you just think your a little god!' Thankyou! Hallelujah! You got that right! Who d'you think you are, Jesus?' Yep! (9) The quote, 'The believer is as much an incarnation...' was in fact plagiarised word for word from the writings of Kenyon. (10) Along the same lines Gloria Copeland says: 'We are the Word made flesh, just as Jesus was' (11) Benny Hinn also says: 'When Jesus was on earth, the Bible says that first He disrobed Himself of the divine form. He, the limitless God, became a man, that we men, may become as he is'. (12) The above quotes at first glance to the reader may appear to have a ring of some truth. However, part truth is more dangerous than no truth because it is more difficult to the average believer to discern. It is time we treated these teachings for what they are - rank and dangerous heresy! It is blasphemy to teach that Jesus never claimed He was God. It is blasphemy to claim to be like God or to be 'an incarnation', or even to have the same qualities or power that He has. This is man attempting to be God. It is New Age, Christian Science, and even Pantheism! It is the same lie that Satan told to Eve in the garden - that she could be like God!

Atonement; Justification:

Copeland states: '...It wasn't the physical death on the cross that paid the price for sins...it wasn't the physical death.

(1) 'Believers Voice of Victory, 12/75.

(2) Alleged prophecy from Jesus: 'Take Time to pray' in 'Believers Voice of Victory'- Aug, 1988, P.9.

(3) Tape entitled: 'Prophecies For 1984-1987', spoken at healing school, Rhema Bible Training Centre, Tulsa, Okla., Dec.12th, 1984.

(4) 'The Power of the tongue' P. 6; 'The Force of Love', Tape Bcc-56, Fort Worth, Texas.

(5) 'Praise the Lord' Trinity Broadcasting tape and text.

(6) 'The believers Authority' by Hagin, P.19.

(7) 'Zoe' by Hagin, P.40,41.

(8) 'Hear and be healed' by Hagin, P.8,13,14; 'God's irresistible word' by Hagin, P.35,36.

(9) 'The Agony of Deceit' by M. Horton, P.44.

(10) 'The Father and His Family' by Kenyon, P.129.

(11) 'Walk in the Spirit' by Gloria Copeland, P.9.

(12) As quoted in 'Charismatic Chaos' by John MacArthur, P.274.

Anybody could do that' (1)...God was manifested in the flesh and justified in the Spirit [mis-quoted 1Tim.3:16]...Jesus accepted the sin nature of Satan in His own spirit...Jesus made himself obedient to the Lordship of Satan at the cross...and I said, you don't mean, you couldn't mean, that I could have done the same thing. He [God] said, oh yeah, if you had the knowledge of the Word of God that He did you could have done the same thing because you are a re-born man, too. (2) ...Jesus' death on the cross was only the beginning of the complete work of redemption.' (3) ...'When His blood poured out, it did not atone..' (4) 'Jesus...was reborn from the dead by the mercy of God'. (5) '...He was re-born in the pit of Hell and resurrected.' (6) Gloria Copeland also says: 'Jesus experienced the same spiritual death that entered man in the garden of Eden'. (7)

As can be seen from the above quotes the W.F. teachers teach that Jesus died spiritually as well as physically, that Satan had control of Him in Hell and that the cross was not full atonement. Yet the Bible states clearly that we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus (Heb.10:10), and that the blood makes full atonement for the soul, (Lev.17:11).

The W.F. teachers claim to believe in Christ's substitutionary death. However this substitutionary death is not on the cross of calvary but in Hell in order to pay off Satan! The W.F. teachers teach that Jesus went to Hell to complete the atonement. Copeland says: '...He allowed the Devil to drag Him into the depths of Hell...For three days...every demon in Hell...tortured Him...suffering in the bowels of the earth...Jesus was born again...a born again man had defeated Satan, Hell and death...' (8) Yet virtually all commentators write that when Jesus died on the cross and He said '**it is finished**' (Jn.19:30), he meant the sacrifice and atonement was finished *on the cross* there and then, not in Hell! Christ's death was also a sacrifice to God, (Eph.5:2), not to Satan. The W.F. teaching misunderstands 'substitution'. Christ was made sin only in a legal and forensic sense. 'Substitution' is an Old Testament concept in which an animal was used as a substitution for sin but it did not *become* sin, but rather sin was *imparted* to it.

The Bible also says that Jesus had power over death (Jn.17:2), and Satan had no hold over Him (Jn.14:30,31;16:33;10:18). As can also be seen from the W.F. quotes Jesus had to be '*born again*' from the dead. Copeland says: '*we are to become one with the Father as Jesus was one with him.*' (9) Charles Capps says: '*He was born again and called the first born from the dead.*' (Col.1:18); *the first born among many brethren (Rom.8:29), and the first begotten from the dead (Rev.1:5). Jesus was born again...*' (10) Capps is not a scholar of the word of God and grossly misuses scripture here. The Greek word for first-born is two words - *first* and *born*. The emphasis is on 'first' or pre-eminence. In the Greek the phrase means that Jesus is *pre-eminent* over all creation. It is not the same Greek word used in John 3 for a sinner being born again, ('*gennao*'). This W. F. error is similar to the error of the Jehovah Witness doctrine - that Jesus was created. The fact is that Jesus was fully man and fully God. This is the heart of the Gospel and the orthodox Christian faith. He did not have to be born again like we do! We are the creature, He is the creator! The finite cannot become the infinite!

The W.F. theology attacks the sovereignty of God. '*The transference of the sovereignty from God to man is very convenient for the Word of Faith people, for it allows them to be the boss rather than God.*' (11) Still, Hagin says: '*If God is running everything, He does have things in a mess.*' (12) '*...He [God] can't get along without you anymore than you can get along without Him.*' (13) However, listen to what the Bible says about the sovereignty of God: '**I have purposed it, I will also do it...For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it...**(Is.48:11),...**He putteth down one, and setteth up another,** (Ps.75:7),...**Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will,** (Eph.1:11). Other scriptures that confirm the above are: Is.46:10; Job 23:13; Ps.115:3; 135:6; Pr.21:1.

Although the W.F. teachers claim to believe in righteousness as a gift from God, they teach this righteousness is God's *nature*, not a legal righteousness credited to our account as is the orthodox belief of scriptures and the church fathers down through the ages. The Bible says we were made in the image of God but the W.F. teachers teach that we only partake of the *nature* of God.

Crenshaw sums up well the W.F. teaching on redemption: '*The whole plan of redemption, according to the prosperity teachers, is turned on its head: God gave Adam the earth. Adam in turn lost it to Satan so that ever since the world has been given legally to Satan.* (14) *From then on man is born with Satan's nature (whatever that is). God has no legal authority on earth. In the words of Fred Price, 'If God came here He would be trespassing, for he has no legal right here.'* (15) *There was no new birth in the Old Testament; there could not be such until Jesus came. When Jesus came He 'operated' only as a man by the 'anointing' of the Holy Spirit. The miracles He did we can do by the same Holy Spirit. When he died he had*

(1) Audio tape #02-0022 titled 'What Satan Saw on the Day of Pentecost'

(2) 'What Happened from the Cross to the Throne', Tape side 2.

(3) 'Believers Voice of Victory', April, 1982, P.3

(4) Form letter, 12/3/79, available from Christian Research Institute, USA.

(5) 'The Mercy of God' by Copeland, P.34.

(6) 'What Happened From the Cross to the Throne', Tape side 2.

(7) 'Gods Will For You', P.5.

(8) 'Believers Voice of Victory', 9/91, P.3,4,8.

(9) 'The Force of Righteousness', P.9.

(10) 'Authority in Three Worlds', P.188.

(11) 'Man as God :The Word of Faith Movement' by Rev. C. Crenshaw, P.419.

(12) 'The Interceding Christian', P.13.

(13) 'The believers Authority', P. 27,28.

(14) Hagin says that, 'The world is presided over by Satan', ('The real Faith', P.28). However, the expression '**god of this world**' means the people of the world worship him, not that he is omnipotent. God is and always had been a ruler above Satan. God has dominion now! (Ps.22:28; 145:13).

(15) TBN, 12 Midnight, Memphis, TN May/June, 1992.

not finished the plan of redemption but had to go to Hell to compensate Satan. While in Hell he received Satan's nature and literally became a sinner...Satan and the demons tortured him for three days and three nights. Since Jesus had never personally sinned, legally Satan could not hold him...But Jesus still had Satan's nature so God made Jesus righteous, justified him, and caused him to be the first one ever to be born again. Then the Father raised him from the dead to exercise dominion. When we are justified, we receive the Father's very nature, which is also the new birth. It is not possible to blaspheme more than this'. (1)

Healing:

The W.F. teaching on healing when put to the test, fails in practice. The 'Faith healers' will not tackle organic diseases such as broken bones, congenital deformities, blindness or even poor eyesight, (Oral Roberts wears glasses), gall stones, burns, etc - in short, anything that is *obvious*. Another disease not healed by the W.F. exponents is 'Down's Syndrome' - a genetic disease which *cannot* be healed by psychosomatic factors.

In contrast Jesus and the apostles healed *all* and *regularly*, (Acts 5:12-16; 3:11; 8:5-7; 19:11,12; 20:6-12; Lk.4:40; etc.), even decaying bodies such as Lazarus. In contrast, today's 'healings', as admitted by the W.F. leaders, (2) are usually *gradual*. To substantiate that healings can be gradual, the W.F. leaders use scriptures such as John 4:52; Luke 17:11-14 and Mark 8:22-26. In Luke 17:11-14 (the healing of the ten lepers), any *progressive* aspect of the healing is not in the healing itself but in the 'going', ('**As they went they were cleansed**'). (3) In fact the word for '**cleansed**' is in the aorist tense which means instant healing! Even if we were to admit that in these verses that time expired for the healings to take place, it could only be a matter of seconds. This would still be vastly different to the healings we are supposed to believe in the W.F. movement.

The exegesis of scripture by the W.F. teachers in many areas lacks scholarship. T.J. McCrossan, a W.F. supporter, in his book '*Bodily Healing in the Atonement*', (P.62) states that the word for heal (*iaomai*), '*Without one exception in the New Testament refers only and always to physical healing, never to spiritual healing*'. However, the Greek lexicons, dictionaries and commentaries do not support this statement! The word for heal is used both literally and *figuratively*. The early church fathers quoting Matthew 13:14; John 12:40; Acts 28:27; Luke 4:18; Hebrews 12:13 and 1Peter 2:24 also testified that the word is used *figuratively* of '*deliverance of other ills of many kinds*' such as a healing '*from sin and its consequences*'. (4) Crenshaw writes; '*The Old Testament usage disagrees with the modern healers, the New Testament usage contradicts them, the Lexicons oppose them, the New Testament scholars disagree with them, but they still believe that heal*' (*iaomai*) *only means physical healing! Everyone is wrong but them.*' (5)

In regard to 1Peter 2:24 and Isaiah 53:5 to which Peter quotes, the contexts are clearly *atonement, sin and forgiveness*. The verse reads: '**Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.**' '*The Hebrew word for healed (rapa) that Peter translates from Isaiah can mean to heal literally, (Gen.20:17; 50:22; Nu.12:13; 2Kngs.20:5,8), but usually it means to heal the hurts of a nation in the sense of restored favour and forgiveness, (Hos.6:1; 11:3; Ex.15:26; Is.19:22; Jer.33:6; 30:17; 51:8,9), or to heal individual distresses, (Jer.7:14; 19:11; 51:9; Ps.41:5; 147:3; Is.61:3). There is no question that in Isaiah 53:5 the word 'healed' means to heal the soul in the sense of forgiveness of sins. Likewise the Greek word in 1Peter 2:24 means to heal the soul in the sense of forgiveness. Virtually no scholar debates this. The problem is that the health and wealth leaders have read an English meaning into the Greek and Hebrew words.*' (6)

The same claims of healings in the W.F. are seen in many cult groups such as Christian Science. It becomes obvious to the investigator of these miracles that much of these claims are *psychosomatic*. Results do not always prove truth, particularly in regard to the claims of the W.F. healings. Doctors also cite that a proven 'placebo' effect (7) is also a valid reason for many so called 'healings'. It should also become obvious to all researchers of W.F. healings that many of these healing evangelists simply lie! In recent years many evangelists have been exposed by the media for their outrageous lies, scams and tricks. W.D. Grant became infamous for putting healthy people in wheelchairs and claiming their healing. Benny Hinn claims in his book '*Welcome Holy Spirit*', that several patients in a Roman Catholic Hospital, '*began to receive instant healing*' when he and others began to anoint them. He writes: '*You could feel God's Spirit all over the building. Within a few minutes the hospital looked almost like it had been hit by an earthquake. People were under the power of the Holy Spirit up and down the hallways as well as in the rooms*'. Yet, on investigation, the hospital issued a statement that, '*No such events have ever occurred at General hospital...[Hinn's] pronouncement can neither be verified through the medical records nor by testimony from past or present personnel of this hospital. Mr. Hinn's claims are outlandish and unwarranted*'. (8)

Many other TV evangelists and healers could also be cited who have been exposed by the media for lies and scams. Robert Tilton has been recently investigated by four federal agencies, including the IRS, FBI, the US Postal Service and the Texas State Attorney General. Tilton has also faced law suits by families who were promised healings but died. In one case, the widow of Tom Crowley sued for \$40 million after receiving a letter five months *after* her husband's death. In this letter Tilton

(1) '*Man As God: Word of Faith Movement*' by Rev. Curtis Crenshaw, P.332.

(2) '*Dynamics of Faith and Confession*' by Capps, P.236.

(3) The Greek '**as they went**' is in the present progressive, (articular infinitive).

(4) '*A Greek Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*', 2nd edition, by Walter Bauer, P.268.

(5) '*Man As God: Word Of Faith Movement*' by Crenshaw, P.141.

(6) '*Man As God: Word Of Faith Movement*' by Crenshaw, P.142.

(7) A treatment with no ingredients that produces the same effect, due to the mindset of the patient.

(8) Report from '*Christian News*', 23/10/95.

said, 'God spoke to me this morning specifically about you, Tom, and he's going to heal you'. (1)

Added to this there are hundreds of cases of tragedy and deaths reported by doctors because of ignorance, false teaching and a failure to seek medical help when things go horribly wrong. In 'We Let Our Son die' by Larry Parker, a familiar story is told of how their son Wesley, although prayed for by W.F. evangelists, grew progressively ill. The parents withheld insulin in belief that he would be healed. Wesley went into a diabetic coma. The parents and those that believed continued to 'confess' healing against all the symptoms and all the odds. True to W.F. teaching they practised denying the symptoms to tragic consequences. Wesley died on August 23, 1973. The parents then believed he would be raised from the dead and they conducted a 'resurrection service'. Eventually he had to be buried. Still the Parkers held to the belief that he would be raised from the dead for over a year after the death. The Parkers were convicted of child abuse and involuntary manslaughter but later had the ruling overturned because of a sympathetic judge. The Parkers and friends had applied the W.F. teachings all too well.

Many books could be written of other tragedies caused by the W.F. teaching being used to its fullest extent. McConnell states that 126 deaths of children were recorded in one report alone because medical help was refused and replaced by prayer. (2) However, the record of Hobart Freeman, pastor of Faith Assembly, Wilmot Indiana, is hard to match. The number of deaths caused by this man's teaching of the W.F. theology is said to be as high as *ninety* in his own congregation alone. (3) Other deaths across the country caused by this man's teaching on healing, is not known, as Freeman ministered widely outside of his own church. Freeman held a doctorate in Old Testament studies and was a renowned scholar. However, he was heavily influenced by Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and the writings of Kenyon. He eventually took the W.F. to its limit when he rejected any help from medicine in favour of faith. Freeman died a victim of his own teaching when he refused help after an ulcerated leg developed complications. Because of the abuses of this man's teaching, several churches, (including Assembly of God, USA), then reacted to the W.F. teaching. Despite this the W.F. movement continued to influence the churches at large in future years. God only knows how much guilt has been inflicted upon adherents to W.F. practices, when it does not work. Guilt and condemnation are the playground of the devil.

When the logic of the W.F. healing is tested several anomalies also arise. What about deaf and dumb people - how can they make 'verbal confessions' for healing? If God wanted everyone to be healthy, then why do we die? If sickness could be eradicated, then why not death? If sickness is a result of sin, then so is death, (Rom.5:12). If we don't have to be sick then we don't have to die! Can we be completely free of sickness without being completely free of sin?

Disease is a result of sin, not sin itself. Jesus bore our sin, not the result of sin. He bore the curse (penalty) of sin. In this life there will still be sin and sickness to some degree. Only in our glorified bodies can there be no sin or sickness and we will then be like Him, (1Jn.3:2). We do not expect sinlessness, so should we expect perfect health? We simply cannot expect to be fully redeemed from bodily suffering in this life. If this were the case it would contradict the life of Paul. The Bible says all creation '*groans*', (Rom.8:19-21). We must await our completion of redemption, (Rom.8:24,25). Our outer man is decaying daily, (2Cor.4:16). Paul says: '*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption...it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body; There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body.*' (1Cor. 15:42-44). Sickness and disease will be defeated only when death is finally defeated. Scriptures themselves refute the W.F. healing theology. Trophimus was left sick, (2Tim. 4:20), as was Paul and Epaphroditus were sick, (Gal.4:13-15; Phil.3:25-27), to name a few. D.A Carson sums up the atonement and the W.F. 'claiming' of healing: '*The cross is the basis for all the benefits which accrue to believers; but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrected bodies*'. (4)

The fact is that God uses disease and sickness but He promises to sustain, (Ps.41:3), not necessarily heal. He can judge sin with sickness, (Ex.15:26; Lev.26:14-26; Nu. 12:9-15; 16:46-49; Dt.7:12,15; 28:58-61; 2Chr.26:12-15,18; Mic.6:13). Many of these scriptures state clearly that The Lord caused and put the sickness upon the people. What about the death of David's child, (2Sam.12:13-16, 22-24), and Paul's 'thorn in the flesh', which most commentators agree was physical, (Greek 'in the flesh')? It is interesting to note too, that Paul did not command Satan to go and he did not deny symptoms as we see done in the W.F. movement today.

Do we need faith to be healed? In Luke 17:12-19, all ten lepers were healed but only one had faith, (vs. 19 'your' is singular)! Other miracles where no faith is mentioned are Matthew 12:13; 14:13; 15:32; Mark 1:31; 4:39; 5:41; 7:35; Luke 13:10; John 2:9.

Verbalisation & Positive Confession:

The W.F. teachers teach that we can create through our own power our own reality circumstances by verbal confession. Yongi Cho says: '*You create the presence of Jesus with your mouth. If you speak about salvation, the saving Jesus appears. If you speak about divine healing, then you will have the healing Christ in your congregation. If you speak the miracle performing Jesus, then the presence of the miracle performing Jesus is released. He is bound by your lips and by your words. He is depending on you.*' (5) ...*Your word is the material which the Holy Spirit uses to create*' (6)

(1) 'Christian Research Journal' Summer 92, P.5.

(2) 'People', 5/88, P.136-138.

(3) 'Assemblies Message Ominous' by Jim Quinn and Bill Zlatos, Fort Wayne, News Sentinel, 2/6/84.

(4) 'The Expositor's Bible Commentary', Vol.8, P.267

(5) 'The fourth Dimension' by Cho, P.83.

(6) 'Fourth Dimension', P.31

Hagin says: *'What I confess, I possess'*. This saying was adopted directly from the late Kenyon, who was heavily influenced by the metaphysical sciences. It is a fact that Hagin has plagiarised (copied or stolen) large amounts of material from the works of Kenyon. (1) Hagin claims: *'I have not prayed one prayer in 45 years...without getting an answer. I always got an answer - and the answer was always yes'*. (2)

W.F. teachers are skilful at selecting texts of scriptures out of context that seem to prove their point. For example, John 14:13 says: *'And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do...'* However, when read in context it continues: *'that the Father may be glorified in the Son'*. The passage then goes on to speak of keeping the commandments. Does John 14:13 really mean we can ask for money or material possessions and receive it regardless? If so, then we could also ask for revenge or a million dollars. Such scriptures need to be read in context with other scriptures such as - abiding in the Word (Jn.15:7), and keeping the commandments (1Jn.3:22), as well as the will of God (1Jn.5:3:22; 1Jn.5:14; James 4:15; Matt.8:2; Ps.40:8). We see from these scriptures that we do not have an open cheque book to always create our own circumstances. The W.F. teachers rarely use the above scriptures concerning the sovereign *will of God* and do not appear to allow room to seek His will. The scriptures that refute the faith teachers and are rarely heard, are those concerning the *will of God*. These are some of the *balancing* scriptures to much of their false teaching: *'And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, he heareth us'*, (1John5:14). *'For that you ought to say, if the Lord will we shall live, and do this or do that. But now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil,* (James 4:15,16). Other scriptures worthy of consideration are: Psalm 40:8; 143:10; Matthew 8:2 and 2Corinthians 12:20,21.

Contrary to W.F. teaching, sometimes the Lord will not hear or answer our prayers, (Ps.66:18; James 4:3). James 4:3 is one the W. F. teachers would like to forget: *'You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts'*. Some W.F. teachers use Matthew 18:19: *'...if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven'*. A careful reading of the whole chapter shows this scripture to be in the context of church discipline!

Robert Tilton and others say that if we have faith and a good confession we should never have problems in life. Yet John 16:33 says we will have trouble in this life. The Bible is also full of 'negative confessions' by Jesus, the apostles and all the prophets. Even Jesus Himself said that each day would have trouble, (Matt.6:34). The Faith teachers say never to confess fear. Yet Paul himself confessed fear several times, (eg. 2Cor.12:20,21; 1Thess.3:5-7; 2Cor.1:8,9; 2:4; 4:8-12,16; 5:4). Unfortunately for the Faith teachers the Bible *promises* tribulation in this life, (1Thess.3:4).

Prosperity Doctrine:

W.F. teaching emphasises giving which is scriptural, but they also stress to give *to get*. The money invariably does not go to churches but to the W.F. teachers and to their own ministries. This is why Hagin can say: *'I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Somebody is going to give me \$50,000. Because you can have what you say'*. (3) Many of the W.F. leaders have already been exposed as charlatans who have *'made merchandise'* of God's people, (2Pet.2:3). Perhaps this is the true issue of the W.F. movement - *money* and *power*. Because of the money that they are able to obtain, the W.F. teachers can use satellite communications to reach tens of millions of people with false teaching and false prophecies.

Many of these false teachers say that Jesus was rich. Oral Roberts wrote a book titled *'How I Learnt Jesus Was Not Poor'*. In it he describes how Judas was the treasurer and Jesus was a businessman who wore designer clothes. The fact is that Jesus was not rich even by the standards of the day! Jesus himself said that He had nowhere to lay His head, (Matt.8:20). Paul was also far from rich, (1Cor.4:9-13), and he suffered often, (Phil.4:11,12). Yet Copeland says that poverty is of the devil, (4) and is an *'evil spirit'*. (5) If this is true then Jesus and Paul were not of God. The heroes of the faith were in fact destitute, (Heb.11:37,38).

Most of these amazing teachings are claimed to come directly from God! Hagin says: *'The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity...I got it directly from heaven'*. (6) *'...You have authority through my name to claim prosperity'*. (7)

The W.F. teachers make much of the word *'prosper'* in the Bible. For example, 3John 2 is quoted: *'Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth'*. The word literally means *'to have a successful journey'* or more loosely: *'to be successful'*. In fact, the *same* Greek word for prosper is used in Romans 1:10: *'...I might have a prospereth journey'*. The fact is that the word *'prosper'* is rarely, if ever, used in a financial sense in the New Testament. Rather it is mostly used in a spiritual sense as should be seen by the context of each verse. The W.F. teachers have failed to distinguish between *needs* and *desires* in regard to prosperity in the Bible. Jesus said: *'...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him'*, (Matt.6:8). The Greek word here for need is *'chreih'* and in the context here should refer to the basic needs such as food, drink or clothing.

(1) See *'A Different Gospel'* by McConnell for examples of this.

(2) *'The Name of Jesus'*, P.16.

(3) *'Mountain Moving Faith'*, 21.

(4) *'Laws of Prosperity'* by Copeland, P.54.

(5) *'Prosperity: The Choice Is Yours'*, 12:4.

(6) *'How God Taught Me about Prosperity'*, P.1

(7) *'New Thresholds of Faith'*, P.55.

The W.F. teachers also ignore so many other scriptures concerning the poor, (Lk.6:20; Mk.10:21; Mk.12:43,44; 1Cor.11:22, etc.), and concerning being rich, (Lk.6:24; Mk.10:25; Matt.6:25; 6:19-21; Mk.4:19; James 5:1-3, etc.). They sometimes quote Philippians 4:3: '*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*' and '*My God shall supply all your need..*', (Phil.4:19). This was written by Paul while in *prison*! However, the full scripture for verse 19 is '*My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus*'. A few verses before Paul also had said '*..For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*'

Miracles are stressed and indeed expected by the prosperity teachers. Robert Tilton, when teaching, repeatedly uses the word 'miracle' and then emphasises the giving of money to *his* ministry. However, the Bible says we cannot expect a miracle, (Matt.16:4). Yet Tilton has a '*holy ground prayer page*' with the imprinted feet of the faith healer. He also has '*miracle anointing oil*', which he sends to you when you supply money. The oil will then produce a miracle if you put it on the point of your need. This kind of scam produces 80-100 million dollars per year with the aid of TV evangelism. Charles Capps teaches people and demonstrates how to pay bills by speaking 'faith' to his mortgages: '*Listen to me, I'm talking to you! Be paid, in the name of Jesus. Disappear. Dematerialised. I don't care how you do it, but be gone! Be paid in full! Jesus said you would obey me*'. (1) Several TV evangelists teaching the above shameful doctrines have been exposed by the media or the church. We are reminded of Paul's words: '*For such are false prophets apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ*', (2Cor.11:12,13).

Recent Development:

At a conference in October, 1997, Kenneth Hagin prophesied that there is a 'new wave' coming. This new spiritual impartation or 'anointing' was demonstrated at this conference. Spiritual drunkenness was exhibited with manifestations that shocked many Christian leaders who watched the tapes of the conference. Hagin was seen hissing and using his tongue like a serpent; men and women slithered down their seats and onto the floor; Copeland was seen crawling across the floor in a drunken state of laughter. The entire conference ended up in pandemonium. It was arguably an open display of demonic activity. This video* is available for the reader to test the fruit of the above Word-Faith leaders.

Conclusion:

Rat poison is 99.995% nutritious and .005% *deadly poison*. Rats love it. In my opinion, the Word Faith teaching is far more dangerous because we are dealing with human souls and lives here! Heresy is truth out of balance. This heresy has already caused numerous schisms and church splits, particularly in the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc countries. (2)

Most W.F. believers I have found to be ignorant of scripture as a *whole*. They usually refuse to research and read the facts. This shows deception and a developed mindset.

The W.F. movement is rooted in cultish origins and the fruit is false teaching which in many areas becomes sheer heresy. Heresy includes the denial of the sovereignty of God, the deity, the personhood, the attributes and the work of God. The W.F. offers easy solutions to life's difficulties that in practice do not work. It is preoccupied with *faith* and *man* instead of the object of faith - God. The W.F. is especially an attack on the sovereignty of God. It is a curious thing that the fear of the Lord and the wrath of God are rarely preached in the W.F. movement, as this would point more to God rather than man. In contrast, money, success and healing methods will always appeal to the self.

The W.F.theology essentially goes beyond the Bible. Many theologians and authors have been warning the church at large concerning the W.F. teaching. Well known theologian and author, R.C. Sproul writes:, '*Very little evidence of any significant knowledge of either church history or theology is displayed by Copeland, Hagin, Tilton, Crouch, and others. These men are not scholars. There is nothing wrong with that...What is alarming, however, is the attitude with which these 'teachers' assert their novelties, claiming divine authority for charting a new course...There is such a thing as heresy.*' John MacArthur says: '*faith theology has turned Christianity into a system no different from the lowest human religions - a form of voodoo where God can be coerced, cajoled, manipulated, controlled, and exploited for the Christian's own ends*'. (3) Finally, Walter Martin, considered by many to be the leading Cult researcher and author of his day, had this to say before he died: '*For ten years I have warned...that we are heading into the kingdom of the cults with the faith teachers. You are no longer heading there, baby, you're there*'. (4)

Many attempts by church leaders have been made to dialogue and to lovingly correct the W.F. teachers but in all instances I know of, they have refused to talk. Instead, many of the W.F. leaders have heaped threats on those who critique them. Hagin once said that any church that refused to accept his ministry, God '*would remove their candlestick*'. (5) The W.F. movement clearly is lacking balance, accountability and spiritual integrity.

On the day of judgement it is not going to be us verses the W.F. teachers. Every one of us will give account to God *personally*. However, we feel we have no choice but to warn people of false teaching. Let the reader check our references and

(1) '*Success Motivation Through the Word*', P.183.

* '*Kenneth Hagin - The spirit of the Serpent*' (Video) - available from TA Ministries. (Not suitable for children to view)

(2) See '*A Different Gospel*' by McConnell, P.193.

(3) '*Charismatic Chaos*' by J. MacArthur, P.265.

(4) '*The Warnings of God*', CRI tape C-201.

(5) '*Ministry of a Prophet*', P.19.

quotes but let the reader especially believe what the Word of God says in its correct context.

The W.F. is '*another Gospel*' (Gal.1:6), and '*another Jesus*', (2Cor.11:4). It is an attempt to bring man up to be the same as God. It is *leaven* (error) introduced into the loaf (truth). Heresy must be challenged, or it, like any error, becomes cancerous to the body of Christ. As one author has written: '*Heresy is to orthodoxy what a prostitute is to a woman.*' (1)

(1) '*A Different Gospel*' by McConnell, P.206.

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Recommended Reading:

'*A Different Gospel*' by D.R. McConnell

'*Man As God: The Word Of Faith Movement*' by Rev. Curtis Crenshaw

'*The Facts on The faith Movement*' by John Ankerberg & John Weldon

'*Kenneth Hagin - The spirit of the Serpent*' (Video) - available from TA Ministries. (Not suitable for children to view)

See also our Tapes '*Christianity in Crisis*' by Hank Hanegraaff under 'Word-Faith' section of our booklist . These tapes have actual recorded voices of Copeland and many others preaching many of the quotes mentioned in this article.