

# **CRITICISM, CONTROVERSY, AND THE LOCAL CHURCH**

By David S. Hagni

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## CRITICISM, CONTROVERSY, AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

Critics must excuse me if I compare them to certain animals called asses, who, by gnawing vines, originally taught the great advantage of pruning them—*Shenstone*

Calvin<sup>1</sup> came into my office with a distraught look on his face, plopped a large stack of articles on my desk, and proceeded to challenge me concerning their contents. “I printed these off the Internet,” he explained, “and I want you to read them and give me your side of the story. If you can give me satisfactory answers, my family and I will stay in your church.” I looked at the first heading and a familiar agitated feeling came into my gut, “**The ‘Faith’ Movement may be Prospering but is it HEALTHY?**”<sup>2</sup>

This was far from the first exposure I had experienced with similar material. Earlier, I had seen John Ankerberg butcher Kenneth Hagin’s words on national television. Dave Hunt wrote a critical evaluation lumping faith teachings with New Age techniques in *The Seduction of Christianity*. Even when D.R. McConnell put his master’s thesis from Oral Roberts University into book form entitled *A Different Gospel*, I was understandably quite interested and concerned, but still uninvolved. However, when Calvin backed me into a corner with his discovery, it was the first time the controversy had directly affected the local people I pastor in our church. Before this instance, the Faith movement controversy was only a distant skirmish between national figures and — what I considered

— their errant critics. But that day it became a personal issue eventually bringing to light significant understandings for me.

In this paper I will give evidence for the sound historical and biblical basis for the principal teachings of the Faith movement as I expose how critics have used unethical tactics, faulty historical research, and errant Biblical scholarship in making their cases against Faith teachers.

One of the important arguments of the Faith Movement critics is that these faith teachings are cultic in origin. If they *do* originate with cultic teaching, then necessarily they are from Satan. Furthermore, if this is accurate, then no self-respecting, God-loving Christian should indulge in such evil and dangerous beliefs, and people should immediately confront or desert any church teaching this type of “faith” as espoused by leaders such as E.W. Kenyon, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and others.

On the other hand, if we can demonstrate that these faith teachings are from God — that is, that they are both historically and biblically sound — then people should feel free to learn, apply, enjoy, and share the benefits of faith as they regularly attend the churches that teach these principles. And if we should find them sound, we should examine why Christian critics have been negligent to bring this information out and seemingly been so determined to discredit their brothers with whom they disagree.

There is definitely substantial scriptural verification for apologetic ministries that seek to understand various beliefs and their relation to the standard accepted revealed Word of God. John was clear in his first epistle in chapter four and verse one instructing his readers to “not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” The Apostle Paul was

all too familiar with the damage of incorrect information as seen in his trouble with Judaizers dogging his missionary path and undermining the Gospel of grace through the introduction of salvation and spirituality through works. He wrote the book of Galatians to set his readers straight again concerning grace.

Paul also wrote 2 Corinthians, at least in part, to give a personal defense of his ministry; Ephesians to offset the temptation to sink into heathen practices; Colossians to warn them not to be led astray by human philosophy, legalism, false mysticism, or asceticism, and 2 Thessalonians to correct the erroneous teaching that Jesus had already come. Peter wrote 2 Peter in an effort to warn of the internal danger of false teachers who could threaten the faith of the church. And Hebrews was written to check the apostasy of Jewish Christians who were tempted to return to Judaism.

In each of these cases, the common theme is the protection of accepted orthodoxy as revealed in Scripture. In each of these cases, error necessitated the occasion of writing. Therefore, if it was mandatory in the days of the New Testament to reply to false doctrine and erroneous teaching, it is safe to assume that the need for the same activity is present in our day, and even more so. However, today there are very few generally accepted guidelines to govern apologetic activities. There are no rules for the game. It has become frenzy, much like a shark-feeding frenzy, which sometimes results in sharks indiscriminately eating other sharks.<sup>3</sup> A stern warning is found in Galatians 5:15, “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”

The guidelines for apologetics — rules for the game, so to speak — should be derived from Scripture. First, the body of Christ is not going to agree on all of the

particular matters of doctrine. History has proved that. Serious accusations of heresy must only pertain to major tenants of the faith, such as salvation through the work and blood and name of the Lord Jesus Christ. These tenants do *not* include whether or not visioning is a legitimate Christian activity<sup>4</sup> or whether or not the biblical practice of positive confession was borrowed by a cult.<sup>5</sup> The point is this, *only serious matters of heresy or immorality should ever go public, and even that only after personal confrontation*. Other items of disagreement should be dealt with between the dissenting parties. This principle is found in Matthew 18:15-17, and its abuse explains the rampant division found throughout the body of Christ.

Secondly, if apologetic critics truly believe a person or group is caught in a false doctrine, the Bible insists in 2 Timothy 3:24-26 that they “must not quarrel; instead, (they) must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose (them) (they) must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil.” According to the Bible the overriding motive of all apologetic work is love and gentleness, giving the possibility they may be wrong themselves.

With the scriptural guidelines in place — acting privately first and publicly only on essential matters of the faith, and conducting one’s work in a spirit of humility — the apologist should be able to do good for the Church. Unfortunately, many times this has not been the way things have been done. We will next look at more examples of the tactics of some of the major critics against the Faith movement in order to expose the unethical bias used in their arguments.

According to biographer David Harrel, the controversy came to a head during a visit from Fred Price to Oral Roberts University in the early 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Apparently, Price, teaching a weeklong series during chapel, was rudely interrupted by one of the ORU Theology faculty who was subsequently reprimanded by President Roberts. This incident surfaced a smoldering caldron of conflicting theologies that reverberated throughout the school. This writer was attending Rhema Bible Training Center and simultaneously taking Greek at ORU during the period of the outbreak of the feud. It was not difficult to see the polarization and strain that the controversy was causing.

Dr. Dan R. McConnell, eventually to be on faculty at Oral Roberts University, was also on campus as a student during this difficulty. His master's thesis, "The Kenyon Connection: A Theological and Historical Analysis of the Cultic Origins of the Faith Movement" was submitted in 1982 to expose the supposedly historical links between the Faith movement and New Thought metaphysics. The thesis later became a book entitled *A Different Gospel*. The essence of the work is to try to show that Kenneth Hagin, the so-called father of the Faith movement, did not author the teachings that bear his name, and that he stole them from E.W. Kenyon who in turn had created them by merging New Thought metaphysics with radical fundamentalism.

McConnell accuses the Faith movement of endangering people with their beliefs on healing and their "materialistic obsession with prosperity."<sup>7</sup> McConnell charges that the Faith movement is "cultic because of its roots (its historical origins) and it is heretical because of its fruits (its doctrines and practices)."<sup>8</sup> He claims the Faith movement preaches a different gospel, different from that preached by Paul, and that Hagin repeatedly plagiarized Kenyon and lied about it. Very serious charges indeed.

McConnell's examples of alleged plagiarism are found on pages eight through 12 and compare Hagin's writings with Kenyon's. What McConnell fails to bring out is that Kenneth Hagin is not a writer. His formal education extended only through high school, although he has always been an avid reader on his own. Since he has had no training for writing, when you read one of his books, you are usually *reading a transcription of his oral messages* into book or pamphlet form. Hagin is a preacher and teacher. *All preachers* borrow, sometimes heavily, without giving credit. It would be absolutely impossible to constantly give credit to those many people a speaker has learned from, even though the words, mannerisms, and even nuances of speech may be identical. Furthermore, one is not legally required to do so in a public address.

I'm sure I say many things verbatim from those I've learned from, though I may not be conscious of it. Sometimes I *am* conscious of it and still do not give credit because of the flow of the message and the fact that people simply do not want or need to hear it. Neither is it an ethical violation, since I would gladly share the source of my thoughts — if I was able to recall them — with anyone who might ask. Certainly we should acknowledge when a whole series depends on a certain source or when short quotations are used, but the essence of what we say and the way we say things publicly needs no acknowledgement, verbatim or not.

It should be noted that every one of the "plagiarisms" were from Hagin's books and magazine articles, originally oral messages, *after* 1950, which was after the time Hagin said he had become familiar with Kenyon's works. Undoubtedly, he preached some of Kenyon's material. (Who wouldn't? It's excellent.) But Hagin also preaches John

Wesley's material as well as numerous others because he recognizes that others have helpful understandings, too.

Another important note is that Hagin did give generous credit to Kenyon in his book *The Name of Jesus* having been given full permission to use the material by Kenyon's daughter, who said she enjoyed a good relationship with Hagin and his ministry.<sup>9</sup> Hagin is far from hiding his appreciation of the teachings of Kenyon; in fact he has always done just the opposite and pointed out the great blessing found in them. In the same way, he has given due credit to John A. MacMillan for his "wonderful pamphlet entitled *The Authority of the Believer*."<sup>10</sup> These are not the manners of a thief or charlatan, as alleged by McConnell, but of a gentleman full of integrity who respects the value of his sources. It appears McConnell has either not done thorough enough research in this area or has deliberately stooped to unethical tactics in an effort to defame the ministry of one he does not agree with theologically.

Another whose strategies are certainly questionable if not outright sinister is Hank Hanegraaff of the Christian Research Institute. Hanegraaff, the "Bible Answer Man," is shown with documentary evidence to have deliberately lied on his national radio show in order to damage the reputation of one who had challenged his accusations against the Faith movement.<sup>11</sup> Hanegraaff has called Kenneth Copeland the "worst of all false teachers."<sup>12</sup> According to Hanegraaff, Copeland is leading the pack that would have to include such undesirables as Arius, Joseph Smith, and Jim Jones! He also blasts pastors and leaders in the movement labeling them cult leaders and their followers cultists.<sup>13</sup> This type of character assassination along with the other slanderous tactics of these critics is uncalled for, unethical, and unchristian.

Both Hanegraaff and McConnell use historical research and Biblical references to validate their tactics against the Faith movement. But does their historical research hold up to scrutiny? If not, it must be disqualified as evidence against the Faith movement. And, do the teachings of the Faith movement have any grounding in historical orthodox Christianity?

McConnell asserts that Hagin ruthlessly confiscated Kenyon's works in order to launch his own ministry. He then proceeds to portray a close association between Kenyon and New Thought metaphysics. The strategy is obvious and admitted — guilt by association. In linking the two, McConnell assumes Kenyon sired a hybrid doctrine that later spawned the Faith movement. In his attempt to condemn Kenyon and his doctrine he hopes to condemn Hagin and the entire Faith movement. We will take McConnell at his own words when he said that “anything that influenced Kenyon has undoubtedly also influenced the modern Faith movement.”<sup>14</sup> Exactly what were Kenyon's influences?

E.W. Kenyon was born at a lumber camp in New York in 1867. Due to his family's extreme poverty, he left school at 10 and went to work in a mill. During his 17th year he was invited to visit a Methodist meeting and received salvation. He was given an exhorter's licensing from the Methodist Episcopal Church and pastored his first church at 19. However, because of his lack of scriptural knowledge and fundamentals in the Christian faith, Kenyon left the ministry over his frustration of not being able to help people or sustain his own Christian walk. With little Biblical truth to guard him, skepticism set in and his young Christian mind weakened. This led him into a period of darkness as he fell out of fellowship with Christ.

During the two or three years when Kenyon was not walking with God he became successful in sales, lived an ungodly lifestyle, and moved to Boston to attend Emerson College of Oratory in order to pursue a life-long dream of an acting career. At this time Kenyon was not even in fellowship with God and clearly not in the ministry. Joe McIntyre, pastor of Word of His Grace Fellowship in Kirkland, Washington, notes in his biography of Kenyon that although Kenyon did begin to delve into philosophy and metaphysics during those three years of darkness, he definitely did not go to Emerson to study metaphysics or to prepare for the ministry.<sup>15</sup>

Kenyon chose Emerson because of its reputation as one of the premier schools in the country for training in elocution, oratory, and dramatic art. It did also train students for *Christian* ministry, but Kenyon was not interested in that aspect of the school. It should also be mentioned that this was before New Thought had heavily impacted the school. Charles Wesley Emerson, founder of the school, solidly embraced the teachings of the Holiness movement as promoted predominately through the Methodists. He formally taught in Charles Cullis' Faith Training College that thoroughly emphasized orthodox Holiness doctrine.

Unfortunately, C.W. Emerson also began to entertain New Thought teachings during the development of his school. Yet, there is no evidence that Emerson or his school had drifted away enough theologically, during the time of Kenyon's stay, to alert Cullis or any other orthodox teacher to error.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the proposed theory of the influence of Ralph Waldo Trine — later a foremost proponent of New Thought — falls through when it is realized that Trine himself was just being exposed to the ideas as a freshman student and professor when Kenyon was studying there.<sup>17</sup> How could

McConnell honestly consider Trine to be a “chief expositor of New Thought at the Emerson College of Oratory”?<sup>18</sup> This and the following evidence show that it is ridiculous to conclude that Kenyon was irrevocably indoctrinated into New Thought metaphysics during his brief stint at Emerson.

McConnell makes a gross error in research when he states that Kenyon spent “the early 1890s” and “from 1895 to 1899. . . in Boston” being influenced by a prominent Unitarian during these formative years of his life.<sup>19</sup> The truth is that Kenyon was in Boston only one year and attended Emerson for only nine months from September 1892 to May 1893.<sup>20</sup> The prominent Unitarian minister was Minot J. Savage. Kenyon admits to attending his services, as McConnell rightly emphasized. But what McConnell neglected to mention is that Kenyon absolutely repudiated — in fact *from the same article* McConnell quoted from — the things Savage taught. Kenyon wrote,

Some have doubtless been thinking along the lines of so called Modern New Thought, and have come to the conclusion that we are all sons of God, that all we have to do is to develop the divine element in us, and that will make us fit to dwell with God eternally. That is, they have accepted so called New Thought instead of a New Creation, and this is not a new thought at all. It is as old as the days of Cain. . . Any doctrine that teaches you and me that we have an element in ourselves which can develop and grow independent of God, and make us fit to stand in the presence of God, is not true. . .<sup>21</sup>

This is quoted at length to further demonstrate the crucial fact that Kenyon did not condone Unitarian or metaphysical thought any time during his Christian ministry. He did encounter and even interact somewhat with these aberrations for a relatively short period

of time when he was out of fellowship with the Lord. However, after exiting Emerson and shortly after his marriage in 1893, he was restored to the Lord under the ministry of the notable A.J. Gordon at Clarendon Street Baptist Church in Boston.

Kenyon then rededicated his life to the ministry and joined the Free Will Baptists who insisted on strict adherence to general atonement, the believer's baptism, the authority of the Word, the deity of Christ, and the unity of the Trinity. They also taught and practiced divine healing and embraced the Second Work Holiness revival. Kenyon was not only familiar with these teachings, he was profoundly affected by them. And, contrary to what McConnell claims, it was under this holiness influence that Kenyon drew his emphasis on faith, healing, and positive confession — not under the influence of New Thought.

McConnell disassociates Kenyon from Holiness because he didn't preach second-work doctrine. The reason Kenyon rejected much of the second-work concept was because he felt it contradicted the new birth and because Christians became frustrated trying to attain it. Yet, he held to and elaborated on the emphasis on divine healing and confession that had originated with Holiness leader Phoebe Palmer. *Palmer began teaching on faith, healing, and confession over 40 years prior to the arrival of metaphysical teachings.*<sup>22</sup>

The truths of faith, confession, and divine healing were passed on from Palmer through the Holiness movement where they influenced others such as Charles Cullis (central figure of the Faith-Cure movement), A.B. Simpson (founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance) and eventually penetrated Kenyon's heart. These teachings, from orthodox Christian ministers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are remarkably similar to the teachings of

the modern Faith movement. There is no substantial evidence that Kenyon drew from metaphysical thought,<sup>23</sup> but rather the evidence suggests that it was the metaphysical leaders who incorporated and adapted ideas earlier bred in the Holiness movement.

Kenyon drank deeply from the Holiness movement. He refuted the metaphysical thought.

Orthodox influence in Kenyon's life and ministry does not end with Holiness. He was very familiar with Hannah Whitall Smith, author of the Christian classic *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* and leader in the Higher Life movement. He carried her prayer of consecration with him always in his Bible and used it in public ministry.<sup>24</sup> Among those others Kenyon highly respected as evidenced in his writings and published works were A.T. Pierson, R.A. Torrey, George Watson, and George Muller. Each of these are respected orthodox ministers who, along with the other positive influences already mentioned, fail to appear in critical historical analyses against the Faith movement.

Given the connections between Kenyon and these ministers and their teachings, it is preposterous to claim, as McConnell does, that Kenyon "does not fit into . . . the Wesleyan-Holiness . . . healing streams."<sup>25</sup> It is even more absurd in the light of the fact that, throughout his ministry, Kenyon never once endorsed New Thought metaphysics. Instead, he consistently exposed its error, yet now his name is being slandered for supposedly doing the very thing he hated. This information on Kenyon's life surely calls into question the far-reaching assumptions and speculations about his beliefs that critics have drawn.

Further, even if such conclusions were true, do Kenyon's supposed beliefs mark him as a heretic? The differences between McConnell and Kenyon or Hagin do not enter into essential matters that would mandate the use of the term "heresy." McConnell,

Kenyon, and Hagin all agree that God is One revealed in three Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They all agree that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and that he became a man, died on the cross, was buried, and resurrected from the dead. They all believe that all mankind has fallen and that the only way to eternal life is through acceptance of the Lordship of Christ. These are the essential matters that if contradicted are grounds for declaring one a heretic.

The beliefs that are brought up by the Faith critics are not crucial to salvific faith or to a basis for a sincere walk with God. The disturbance comes from conflicting interpretations of biblical texts and misunderstanding of those interpretations. The issues under attack are understandings that provide for an increasing measure of victorious Christian experience during the time a believer spends on this earth. The principles in question do not have their origination in metaphysical thought, but have come from a much earlier source — namely, the Bible. These biblical interpretations are found represented in the reputable ministries of men and women of God in history as well as today. We will restrict the biblical discussion to the application of daily faith, divine healing, and a specific of Christ's work of redemption.

McConnell claims that principles found in the Bible that the Faith movement teaches are “formulas and laws . . . (that) are nothing more than recycled New Thought metaphysics.”<sup>26</sup> He has trouble with the idea that God set impersonal spiritual laws into effect. In his view, the laws encroach upon God's own sovereignty in that a personal God could never be limited or controlled by an inferior, impersonal law or force such as faith. However, did not God create gravity? Is He limited or controlled by this natural law? Does the law of gravity encroach upon God's sovereignty?

God did create gravity and He created it as a sovereign act, but gravity does not encroach upon God's sovereignty and neither do the principles covering spiritual promises. God can certainly override the force of gravity as demonstrated in the floating of the ax head in the Old Testament, yet, by and large, God works and operates through this *impersonal force*. If someone jumps off a high tower, gravity doesn't care if the person is a Christian or not. It seems fair to consider faith like gravity – impersonal. God isn't impersonal, He is a caring Father. He cared so much that He gave us faith as a tool to use, to develop, to grow, to teach, and to live by.

Then, to relegate the powerful understanding of how to develop and use faith through positive thinking and positive confession to mere cultish practices, as McConnell does,<sup>27</sup> is to overtly neglect the unmistakable testimony of many orthodox ministers who taught the command of faith. Among those are A.T. Pierson, Charles H. Pridgeon, George B. Peck, A.B. Simpson, and Carrie Judd Montgomery.<sup>28</sup> It also neglects the undeniable testimony of these truths found in God's Word. In his letter to the Philippians Paul said to *think* on things that “are true. . . noble. . . right. . . pure. . . lovely. . . admirable . . . excellent. . . or praiseworthy. . .” (Phil. 4:8). The Bible is clear that how we think about things *does* directly affect our outlook, which does affect our words, which does affect our outcome.

In looking at the Children of Israel, the ten spies *thought* wrong about the Promised Land and the challenges before them. They, in turn, *spoke* wrong concerning the situation and infected the rest of the community, save two, with unbelief. The author of Hebrews states in chapter 4 that these people did not mix *faith* with the promise. It seems obvious from the text that one way to mix (use) faith is to do what Joshua and

Caleb did, and that is to think and speak in agreement with the promise so God can bring it to pass.

This type of teaching does not seem so strange when Mark 5 is examined to discover exactly what the woman with the issue of blood did to use her faith—she spoke. None of the critics would deny that we need to think, believe, and confess to appropriate salvation (Rom. 10:9,10). Why couldn't the same principles work with every promise that God, in his sovereignty, gave to us through Jesus Christ? Apparently, the issue is not the sovereignty of God but that we believe Jesus told the truth when he said that whenever someone believes what he says will happen, he will have what he says.<sup>29</sup>

The Bible also contains the story of David who believed that his God's power working through his confessing faith would nullify the confessing faith of the ungodly Goliath. In fact, it was David who originally coined the phrase, also used by Paul,<sup>30</sup> connecting faith with words that said, "I believed; therefore I have spoken."<sup>31</sup> The biblical examples of faith confession are too numerous to gloss over.

Healing is another issue McConnell raises against the Faith movement. His shocking accusation that "Faith teachers assert the metaphysical dogma that sickness is always caused by unbelief and sin"<sup>32</sup> is totally unfounded. In truth, Hagin teaches sin is only the *ultimate* cause of sickness and that when "some persist in disobedience, God will permit the devil to put sickness on them."<sup>33</sup> This sound very similar to what Paul said to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11 when they were not respecting the Lord's body. Not all died prematurely, only "some." Clearly, neither author implies that sickness is always caused by sin, but that in some cases people have opened the door to sickness through disobedience.

McConnell further alleges that the Faith movement promotes metaphysical sensory denial in the attainment of healing. As evidence to the contrary, Craig Hagin – grandson of Kenneth E. Hagin – as a teenager underwent surgery in the City of Faith due to a brain tumor. This was the decision of his father and supported by his grandfather. These decisions are not those usually made of a family that practices sensory denial.

The true teaching has never been to *deny* physical symptoms, but that the Word of God is powerful enough to *change* them. McConnell quotes Hagin’s encouragement to believe “the Word of God regardless of what the physical evidences may be” and then interprets this to mean “the symptoms should be denied because they are not real.”<sup>34</sup> Hagin never said that. Upon reading the whole chapter, it is readily apparent that Hagin is instructing people to put the promises of healing found in the Bible *first place* over symptoms, not deny them. He wants people to continue to trust in God even though they can still feel pains, aches, or sickness in their bodies. It seems Hagin is encouraging us to walk by faith and not by sight.

McConnell’s biblical support of the criticisms is weak. He sites the groaning of creation in Romans 8, Job’s sufferings, and Paul’s thorn in the flesh to buttress his stance that not every Christian can expect to be healed when they pray in faith. Yet, isn’t it odd that sickness and disease are not found in Paul’s list of difficulties in Romans 8. Neither are they found in the list in 1 Corinthians 11. McConnell states emphatically that God tore Job’s hedge of protection down and was the source of Job’s troubles. However, the text never states that God tore the hedge down, only that it was down. There does seem to be a hint in chapter 1 that Job brought it down himself through his own fear.

The suggestion that Paul was afflicted with an eye disease, epilepsy, or malaria ignores a basic principle of biblical hermeneutics—allowing the Bible to interpret itself if it has anything to say on the matter. We don't need to surmise what Paul might have meant by declaring that he had a "thorn in the flesh" because the Bible already defines exactly what this menace is. "Thorn in the flesh" appears first in the Old Testament to describe what the inhabitants of Canaan would become to Israel if they didn't drive all of them out as they entered to possess the land. David called the sons of Belial thorns.

The passage in 2 Corinthians 12 states that the thorn was a messenger from Satan, not God, to keep Paul from being exalted. Paul was exalting the word of God all throughout Galatia during this time and the religious Judaizers were dogging his tracks from city to city undermining his work. They finally stoned him in Lystra.

The Bible is consistent. Thorns in the flesh were never sicknesses, they were *always people*—people motivated by Satan to stop the spread of the Word of God. They were in the Old Testament trying to hinder the Word from coming to pass for Israel, who God was trying to exalt to possess the land. They were present in Paul's day attempting to stop the spread of Paul's teaching, while God was trying to exalt Paul's message throughout the missionary lands. And, the thorns are with us today trying to hinder teachings of faith from helping many more people to escape the bondage of sin, sickness, and poverty.

Another area under fire is the teaching of the "ransom" theory of atonement. The Faith critics color this teaching in order to make it sound as if it is some radically bizarre and dangerous doctrine that threatens the stability of the Church. None of them care to note that the idea of Jesus descending to hell for us is found in that historic confession of

faith used throughout the church called the Apostles Creed, or that Martin Luther believed Jesus was active between the cross and His resurrection. They don't tell their listeners and readers that the ransom theory was actually the dominant theory of atonement the first thousand years of the church and that many of the Church Fathers held to it.

The original ransom theory saw Jesus as the ransom price paid to Satan for man's salvation.<sup>35</sup> In 18 years in the so called "Faith movement" I have only read and heard the thought that Jesus was the ransom price paid *to God* for man's salvation. Having studied the substitutionary, propitiatory, satisfaction, sacrificial, and other theories of atonement, I have come to conclude they all have something to offer in our understanding of Christ's magnificent work in redeeming us. A ransom paid to God fits nicely with Isaiah 53:10 which says "It was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and . . . the Lord makes his life a guilt offering . . ."

There are many other areas of conflict in the Faith movement controversy such as the teachings on identification, God-men, and prosperity. All of these areas have a similar pattern. An accusation is made to attack the validity of a biblical concept or the character of its proponent. Then the criticism is heralded publicly without a fair chance for rebuttal. While all the time there is another side to the story, a biblical explanation, a historical correction. It is this writer's opinion that McConnell's work is based on assumptions he incorrectly drew from his historical research. Those conclusions merged with biased theological and biblical views and continue to result in unethical antagonistic efforts toward Christians who emphasize faith, healing, and prosperity.

The solution to this mess is simple. The body of Christ should call these agitators to leave these people alone and insist they use at least as much sense as Gamaliel who

encouraged the angry persecutors against Peter and the apostles to “consider carefully what you intend to do . . . leave these men alone . . . for if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”<sup>36</sup> The opposition continues to chew on our branches and the movement continues to grow. I’m sure Gamaliel would understand why, but I don’t think the Faith critics have figured it out.

After I fully explained “my side of the story” to Calvin he stated softly, “Well, I don’t have any problem with that.” But the seed of doubt had been sown. Calvin was a brand new Christian. He and his wife were just learning to worship and trust God. I had just baptized him. Soon he dropped all church attendance and he and his wife recently separated. I believe the Faith critics are partly responsible for causing this man to stumble, and only God knows how many others like him. At least now, if and when another “Calvin” plops another pile of papers on my desk, I will be able to put this one in his hand.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Name has been changed.

<sup>2</sup> Mark E. Howerter, "The 'Faith' Movement may be Prospering but is it HEALTHY?", 6/24/97 Stuart St. John, <http://www.misslink.net/chofgod/healthy.htm>

<sup>3</sup> James R. Spencer, *Heresy Hunters: Character Assassination in the Church* (Lafayette, Louisiana, Huntington House Publishers, 1993), chapter 3.

<sup>4</sup> Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon, Harvest House Publishers, 1985), p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel: A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement*, (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1988), p. 137.

<sup>6</sup> David E. Harrell, Jr., *Oral Roberts: An American Life*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 423-428.

<sup>7</sup> McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, p. 94

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii, introduction.

<sup>9</sup> Joe McIntyre, *E.W. Kenyon and His Message of Faith: The True Story*, (Orlando, Florida, Creation House, 1997), p. 339.

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Believer's Authority*, (Tulsa, Oklahoma, Faith Library Publications, 1984), forward.

<sup>11</sup> James R. Spencer, *Bleeding Hearts and Propaganda: The Fall of Reason in the Church*, (Lafayette, Louisiana, Huntington House Publishers), p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> Spencer, *Heresy Hunters*, p. 95.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>14</sup> McConnell, *Heresy Hunters*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> McIntyre, *E.W. Kenyon*, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, p. 107.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> McIntyre, *E.W. Kenyon*, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307-311, McIntyre throws doubt on McConnell's two eye witnesses.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, p24.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p135.

<sup>27</sup> McIntyre, *E.W. Kenyon*, p. 137-139.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249-256.

<sup>29</sup> Mark 11:23, (All scriptures taken from the New International Version).

<sup>30</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:13.

<sup>31</sup> Psalm 116:10.

<sup>32</sup> McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Key to Scriptural Healing*, p. 19.

<sup>34</sup> McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, p. 152.

<sup>35</sup> Spencer, *Heresy Hunters*, p. 102.

<sup>36</sup> Acts 5:33-39.