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# Editorials

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## CHARISMA'S ANNUAL CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE

*Charisma* magazine editor, J. Lee Grady, informed readers in a recent editorial of the stark contrast between Christianity in China and in the United States. Grady's comments followed his trip to China last January and were featured in the magazine's June 2001 issue. In making the comparison, he wrote that the Gospel message in the United States is "so self-absorbed" and "nauseating at times."

"In China," he wrote, "serving the Lord is a daily sacrifice."

While his criticisms more accurately targeted Charismatic and Pentecostal camps, a clear distinction between these groups and non-Pentecostals and Evangelicals was not made. Grady's rebukes included:

- Criticizing a prominent evangelist who booked simultaneous speaking engagements and eventually canceled the church that offered the smaller financial return.
- Indicting celebrity speakers who demand luxury accommodations and five-figure fees for their performances and then fake the anointing by pushing people to the ground.
- Objecting to the "self-centered drive" of Charis-

matic preachers who use God to get "my breakthrough," "my blessing," and "my anointing."

Grady went further to declare that, "There's no brokenness in the preacher's voice, no surrender in his tone and no cross in his message."

While Grady's comments may be praiseworthy and right on target, they are just more of the double-speak that has become fashionable for the magazine which claims to be "About Spirit-Led Living." Last year, in an issue which celebrated the magazine's 25 years of publishing, Grady wrote: "What began as sincere Christian faith became infected with nauseating selfishness. At that point, I believe the Lord withdrew His blessing and moved on." The magazine's founder and publisher, Stephen Strang, has issued similar thoughts in such editorial pieces as "Practicing What We Preach" (June 1993), "Thoughts About Advertising" (July 1995), and "The Vital Gift of Prophecy" (March 1999).

The fact is, despite *Charisma's* periodic bouts of conscience, the magazine still is one of the largest promoters of Charismatic and Pentecostal icons who challenge the very authority and sufficiency of God's Word with their man-made proclamations and anointings. The magazine also continues to advance the careers and ministries of men and women who bring reproach upon the Gospel with their undisciplined and exuberant lives, and their self-serving and heretical theologies.

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record of God's revelation" instead of the revelation itself, the WCG was using the language of neo-orthodoxy, not orthodoxy (see Peter Ditzel, "Transforming the Truth," *The Quarterly Journal*, July-September 1998, pg. 11). But the WCG's statement of beliefs as it now appears on its web site does not improve anything. While it has added that the Scriptures "are the inspired Word of God," it continues to describe them as merely the "foundation of truth" and has removed the word "infallible" from its previous statement about the Scriptures being a record of God's revelation. So now, according to the WCG, even as a "record," they are not infallible. But the WCG now adds a new sentence in which "infallible" does appear: "The Holy Scriptures constitute ultimate authority in all matters of doctrine, and embody the infallible principles that govern all facets of Christian living." Notice in this sentence that it is the *principles* embodied in the Scriptures, not the *Scriptures*, that are infallible. These two concepts are far from equivalent. The WCG's stance on the Holy Scriptures leaves them open to believe much of the Bible is an accurate record of inspired myth given as a foundation of truth that embodies infallible principles by which

we should live. In other words, this leaves one to interpret the Creation, the Flood, the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the Law at Sinai, and even the Incarnation and the Atonement as not historical facts, but stories that teach us "infallible principles."

13. J. Michael Feazell, "No Other Name" (part one), *Worldwide News*, December 2000. Also published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, [http://www.wcg.org/wn/00december/no\\_other\\_name.htm](http://www.wcg.org/wn/00december/no_other_name.htm).

14. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle*. New York: Harper Trophy, 1956, pg. 205.

25. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. Peter Ditzel, "Are They Condemned

Because They Never Heard the Name of Christ?", *The Plain Truth*, October 1989, pg. 21.

30. Cited under the subheading, "Eternal Judgment" from the "Statement of Beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God," op. cit.

31. "No Other Name" (part two), op. cit.

32. Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Incredible Human Potential*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1978, pg. 162, italics, caps, ellipses, and brackets in original.

33. *Ibid.*, pg. 88.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Herbert W. Armstrong, *Mystery of the Ages*. Pasadena, Calif.: Worldwide Church of God, 1985, pg. 105, caps and italics in original.

36. J. Michael Feazell, "Only One Name," *Worldwide News*, February 2000. Also published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, [http://www.wcg.org/wn/00february/only\\_one\\_name.htm](http://www.wcg.org/wn/00february/only_one_name.htm).

37. See *When a Loved One Dies — Articles About Grief and Hope*, published on the Worldwide Church of God web site, <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/loved/default.htm>. (Esp., Keith Stump, "Beyond Death," <http://www.wcg.org/lit/booklets/loved/loved7.htm>.)



## EDITORIALS

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The sincerity of Grady's remarks may well be disputed by the fact that sprinkled throughout the same issue in which he offered his criticisms, one can find numerous advertisements for conferences, conventions, and revivals featuring Ken and Gloria Copeland, Tommy Tenney, Creflo Dollar, Mike Bickle, Joyce Meyer, Oral Roberts, and other questionable and controversial speakers.

For example, on page 36, "Prophet" Kim Clement is pitched as the keynote speaker at the "Apostolic & Prophetic Worship Training Conference." This gathering promised that attendees would "Learn how to Activate your Prophetic Anointing or give it an oil change and lube." It would also include "Prophetic Worship that will kick the devil's butt." A few pages earlier, the magazine advertised *Our God Is One*, a 283-page, \$24.95, hardcover book that promised to change "the way you view the Oneness Pentecostal movement."

Grady and the magazine he edits can continue to have their annual or periodic crisis of conscience, but until they stop promoting and advertising the very ones they criticize, their judgments — no matter how accurate — mean nothing.

—MKG

## SUPERNATURAL MESSAGES FROM THE MUNDANE?

Modern-day prophets are an ingenious lot. When mundane circumstances are combined with their fertile imaginations, they come up with all sorts of supernatural interpretations and messages from the Divine. Few realize that what has invaded the Church are very old pagan practices in a new, more acceptable, outfit. There really is nothing new under the sun.

And if anyone surveys a current inventory of prophetic omens, he will be driven to the unmistakable conclusion that God is a big sports fan. Professional, collegiate, it doesn't matter, this new wave of prophets would have us believe that God is sending revelation through them all. Sporting events are not just "big business" for the Las Vegas oddsmakers, but for the Almighty and His Church.

Take for instance, Vineyard pastor James Ryle. Ryle claims revelation knowledge from a purported dream he said he had in 1989. He said the dream revealed to him that coach Bill McCartney and his Colorado University football team would be empowered by God's Spirit and would have a "golden season." And they did. However, when it came to their last game, played for the national championship, Ryle's dream no longer held significance. Ryle said he received a new and different omen from the Lord by way of the team's mascot and the Holy Spirit's prompting him to Isaiah 21:6.