

tion package amounted to more than \$1.25 million." This amount, critics charge, is "too high" and made him one of the highest, if not the highest, paid non-profit director for the San Antonio area. Also, "Hagee's compensation was among the highest packages for television evangelists in 2001, according to IRS 990 filings," the *Express-News* further stated. The \$1.25-million figure reflected \$540,000 in compensation from Global Evangelism Television (the television unit of Hagee's ministry), \$300,000 for serving as president of Cornerstone Church, and \$410,000 in benefits from GETV, including contributions to his retirement package.

Hagee's retirement package, known as "The John Hagee Rabbi Trust," includes "a \$2.1 million 7,696-acre ranch outside Bracketville, with five lodges, including a 'main lodge' and a gun locker. It also includes a manager's house, a smokehouse, a skeet range and three barns," the newspaper disclosed.

Hagee and his wife, Diana, own a six-bedroom, 5,275-square-foot home. The house, said to be "in one of San Antonio's most exclusive gated communities," is valued at nearly \$700,000.

Televangelists like Hagee and Meyer have long tried to justify their lavish and unrestrained lifestyles by claiming those in the secular business sector easily demand such financial compensation. They also tend to excuse their living in extreme wealth by wrongly claiming that critics say Christians should live in extreme poverty. There is, however, middle ground and Scripture clearly establishes the character for those devoting their lives to ministry. It is one of virtue, reputation, moderation, and balance (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1).

Those who hunger for earthly palatial mansions, private jets, and costly sports cars, would do well to attempt to satisfy their insatiable desires in the secular world rather than bring scorn onto the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ is one of self-denial and self-sacrifice, not an abundance of possessions (Luke 12:13-21).

—MKG

GARNER TED ARMSTRONG DIES

Garner Ted Armstrong, disgraced televangelist and son of the late Herbert W. Armstrong, died Sept. 15, 2003. Armstrong died from complications of pneumonia and had been hospitalized for several weeks. He was 73.

In 1978, Armstrong was excommunicated from the Worldwide Church of God, the sect founded by his father. He earned all his degrees — a bachelor's, master's, and doctorate — from the Worldwide Church of God's Ambassador College in Pasadena, Calif. Until his ouster, Armstrong was vice president of both the church and its college, and was the movement's primary spokesman.

Following excommunication from his father's church, Armstrong established his own ministry, the Church of God International, based in Tyler, Texas. In 1995, Armstrong resigned as church president and board chairman amid charges of sexual assault. He continued with the church's television broadcasts until removed by church leaders in 1997.

Armstrong continued his media presence through the Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelical Association and, in 1998, established the Intercontinental Church of God.

Despite his expulsion from the Worldwide Church of God, the younger Armstrong remained true to the many unbiblical and heretical teachings taught by his father. These included a defective view of the nature of God, conditionalism, Sabbath worship, festival keeping, and British Israelism.

Claims of Armstrong's viewing audience for his broadcasts varied from 5 million to 20 million. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "his splinter churches amassed only about 5,000 members, compared with an estimated 80,000 for his father's Worldwide Church of God."

—MKG

CODE TWO FOR DROSNIN

Perhaps former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Michael Drosnin thinks the old saying, "One good turn deserves another" should be revised to say, "One bad book deserves another." At least that's how Drosnin's *Bible Code II* is being received. The book, released in December 2002, is the sequel to his 1997 best-seller, *The Bible Code*.

Drosnin claims "a Bible beneath the Bible," and that by skipping across an equal number of characters or spaces, one can form new words revealing the hidden messages or codes of the Bible. Drosnin's technique of equidistant letter sequencing (ELS) has been debunked by most countercult groups and secular investigators (see further, *The Quarterly Journal*, January-March 1998, pp. 4, 9-13). This kind of "letter play" can be done with any secular book. How exact could all of this be anyway, because Drosnin uses a particular Hebrew Bible that is not the same as other Hebrew Bibles? It is much like our choice of modern translations, which may be the same in substance, but not necessarily in style or word order.

Because of the popularity of Drosnin's contrived methods and ominous predictions, the practice of finding coded messages within Scripture has been successful grist for other dabblers in biblical prophecy, including Paul Crouch, Grant Jeffrey, and Hal Lindsey.

In *Bible Code II*, Drosnin says he has uncovered a prophecy that speaks of an atomic holocaust in 2006. His earlier volume designated 1996 (the Hebrew year 5756) as being "encoded" for an "atomic holocaust."

Drosnin, a reporter by trade, is neither a scientist nor an archaeologist and does not speak Hebrew. Therefore his books are rejected by many as baseless fantasy no matter how creative.

His latest book posits that space aliens made a trip to our planet in the distant past and left behind obelisks near the Dead Sea. These obelisks bear secret messages written on them, says Drosnin. He does not say what the messages are about. He offers no archaeological evidence for these claims.

One code word that Drosnin produced was the Hebrew *lashon*. He says the word should be interpreted *Lisan*. The *Lisan* is the prominent projection of moon-scape-like marl that juts into the Dead Sea from east to west and is easily visible on a map of Israel. It is chalky, inhospitable, and riddled with deep valleys and high projections. It is a crumbly mix of gypsum, limestone, clay, sand, and shell. It has worn down considerably over thousands of years and any buried "treasure" would have been exposed long ago. Geologists in Israel for years have known its makeup. All the aliens would have accomplished by putting the obelisks there is a guarantee that no one would ever find the buried treasure. The location is too remote.

Drosnin says — and wouldn't you know it — that the Jordanian Government, at the last minute, without explanation, withdrew permission for him to do the archaeological research on the *Lisan* (pg. 94) in Jordanian territory where it rests. So, in the end he admits he has not been there.

Drosnin then creates other mean-nothing phrases (by letter skipping) and somehow comes up with the idea of aliens seeding our planet, which is his answer to where life on earth began. Though he claims to be working in the Hebrew Bible, any thought of a Creator in Genesis 1 is out the window. Drosnin also says that some words have double and triple meanings. The words mean what Drosnin wants them to mean.

Because Drosnin wrote the book in 2001 (with a copyright of 2002), he "found" nothing about weapons inspectors, the Iraq war, and other current events, such as United Nations Embassy bombings. Perhaps he will find them in *Bible Code III*.

Drosnin sees himself as someone who has been chosen to be the decoder and may be able to delay the world's end in 2006. Drosnin also claims to have an "in" with the Mossad, Israel's secret service. He says he has met with the advisors to Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat, Bill Clinton, and with Ariel Sharon, but he offers no documentation.

Drosnin (like the Raelians) also lays out a scenario of aliens bringing their DNA to earth via a spaceship (see pp. 143-145). He does admit that these wild ideas were brought forth by Francis Crick as far back as 1973. Crick put himself out on the lunatic fringes of science with his ideas.

The evil genius of Drosnin's book is that there is absolutely no documentation for his claims, nor is there any objective way to check his claims. Jesus talked about truth being established by two or three witness. Apologetics groups, like PFO, could never get away with undocumented assertions.

Drosnin's work is clearly sci-fi futurism sprinkled with archaeological mystery, spaceships, and obelisks no one has ever seen that have the key to the end of days. He clearly knows what drives the American mind and that people are looking and longing for myths. That Drosnin talks about terrorists is no surprise. Suitcase bombs were being talked about in the 1980s in the novel *The Fourth Protocol*.

Reviewer Randall Ingermanson concludes: "His 'codes' are not science. They are not codes. They are so bogus it hurts." Other critics say Drosnin's original book "was based on a fundamental misunderstanding and misuse of science." His sequel hasn't fared much better. One reviewer wrote, "If, like me, you found his first book to be entertainingly silly, this one will be a real treat."

—GRF

WILL THE REAL AUTHOR PLEASE STAND UP?

In *The Prayer of Jabez*, Bruce Wilkinson explains "how the remarkable prayer of a little-known Bible hero can release God's favor, power, and protection." But now, the first-person, autobiographical framework of the phenomenal best-seller of recent years is being disputed.

For more than a decade, Edward Plowman has kept his eye on what he labels "an exercise in deception" in the arena of Christian writing. What is this exercise? It is "ministry celebrities who cede most or all of their prose to [ghostwriters] who receive little or no acknowledgment."

In "Ghostwriters in the Machine," his recent article for *World* magazine, Plowman discloses that it was "Multnomah Publishers editorial executive David Kopp, 53, who wrote Bruce Wilkinson's blockbuster, *The Prayer of Jabez*." Plowman further notes that "Missing from the cover of the first 8 or 9 million copies of *Jabez* is Mr. Kopp's name; it now appears as a 'with' byline in small print." In later editions, Kopp's name appears on the inside title page, and Wilkinson acknowledges Kopp as "his writing partner" on the acknowledgement page.

The Evangelical Christian Publishers Association adopted a set of standards for members which includes, "co-writers or collaboration should be clearly identified as such." Kopp told *World* that he "wishes the ECPA had used the word 'accurately' rather than 'clearly.'"

—MKG