

The Quarterly Journal



THE NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION OF PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

VOL. 19, NO. 4

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1999

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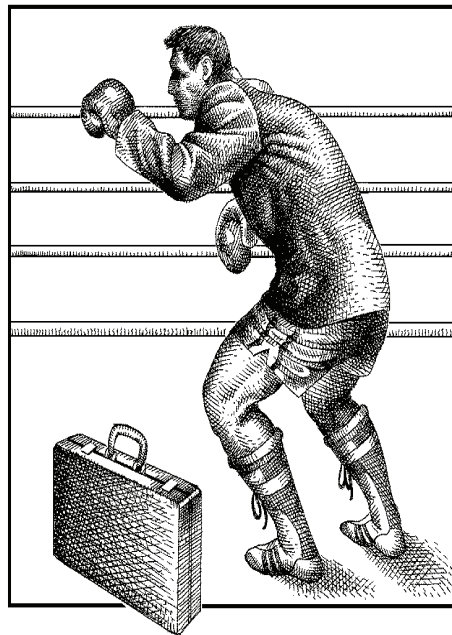
Rod Parsley: The Raging Prophet

“Breaking Through” His Unorthodox Doctrine and Practice

by G. Richard Fisher

It is hard to describe a “worship service” led by pastor and television evangelist Rod Parsley. Whether viewing at home by way of his popular daily television broadcast, *Breakthrough*, or as part of his 12,000-member congregation, his services could, perhaps, be described as a hybrid of pep rally, boxing match and professional wrestling with smatterings of Bible verses and hyped-up claims that take people over the edge of hysteria. It is primal scream set to spiritual aerobics. Parsley is the ultimate cheerleader and professional boxer combined. He deftly and quickly moves people into altered states of unreality. There is no question that he can be a compelling and convincing speaker. Neither does he have difficulty or qualms about hosting the worst of Word-Faith teachers and promoting their agendas.

Rodney Lee Parsley charges back and forth across the stage of his World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio, sweating profusely, railing against the devil in a demonstration of heart-pounding Christian calisthenics and his crowds love it. They follow his lead, bouncing, swaying and screaming. It is raw pandemonium. They repeat whatever mantras



he gives them to say, waiting to be smacked, pushed or pommelled to the floor by the “Raging Prophet.”

Though Parsley has difficulty, at times, pronouncing biblical names, his stride and jarring verbal onslaughts are unabated. He is definitely emerging as a key player and force to be reckoned with in the world of charisma. Parsley further demonstrates he has arrived among the rich and famous of the Charismatic world when he found himself featured in the cover story of *Charisma* magazine in March 1998. Parsley’s meetings are so out of control that he sometimes makes even faith healer Benny Hinn or Brownsville Revival evangelist Steven Hill appear tame.

His preaching style and intonations are well likened to R.W. Schambach but revved-up considerably. His preaching raps are reminiscent of pseudo-evangelist Marjoe Gortner and, at times, he chops his way across the stage with a grimace reminding one of the old professional tag team, the Bushwhackers. No doubt about it,

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he is a showman *par excellence* and he has the moves to prove it.

Parsley melds the antics and craziness of the Toronto revival, the Pensacola (Brownsville) outpouring and the laughing revival of Rodney Howard-Browne. He shakes in some Word-Faith teaching and then uses Jesus as a prop to try to legitimize the whole thing. His followers seem to reason that the wilder the time, the more evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit.

Even his Charismatic colleagues acknowledge his showman traits. *Charisma*, in its cover story, called him the "electric evangelist" and described him this way:

"Part warrior, part cheerleader ... Parsley's growing congregation and nationwide audience have come to expect both sass and savvy from this entertaining preacher. ... And he's not afraid of shock-value preaching. ... Parsley appears to be a good showman."¹

In actual fact, Parsley's preaching does not have the shock value that his antics have.

THE GENESIS OF A SHOWMAN

In Parsley's book, *The Backside of Calvary*, one can find within just two adjacent pages biographical information which is contradictory. However, while this segment of the book is not meant to be a detailed biography, tellingly absent is any reference to a conversion story. Moreover, it appears that Parsley has little, if any, formal ministerial training. He dropped out of school in his second year at Circleville Bible College.

The initial biographical information found in this volume states:

"Rod Parsley began his ministry as an energetic 21-year-old in the backyard of his parent's Ohio home. The fresh, 'old-time gospel' approach of Parsley's delivery immediately attracted a hun-

gry, God-seeking audience."²

Yet, on the very next page, we read:

"Rod Parsley began his ministry as an energetic 19-year-old, in the backyard of his parent's Ohio home."³

His family did not just provide a derivation for his ministry, but as we will see, Parsley's backyard preaching efforts have grown into a lucrative, family business empire.

Parsley was an assistant to Lester Sumrall. Sumrall, who died in April 1996, claimed his anointing from Smith Wigglesworth.⁴ In 1992, Sumrall supposedly passed his "sword of anointing" to Rod Parsley and his wife.⁵ The idea of a "sword of anointing" is resurfacing as the latest Charismatic cliché. In Pensacola, at the Brownsville Assembly of God, they have actually used real swords to dramatize such a passing.

Christian Research Institute has issued a warning about Parsley, which reveals his disdain for formal Bible training:

"Caution and discernment should be exercised when listening to Rod Parsley because he considers himself to be a disciple of Lester Sumrall, who promotes Word of Faith theology ... Also, his statement on TBN's 'Praise the Lord' that 'exegesis X's out Jesus' (6/26/92) demonstrates an irresponsible perspective toward the serious study of the Bible. This type of anti-intellectualism is dangerous because it can lead to a faulty interpretation of God's Word."⁶

ALL-POWERFUL

The Hawaiian-based apologetic group, Let Us Reason Ministries, reports in its web site article, "Rod Parsley's anointing," just how powerful the rising evangelist believes himself to be:

"Speaking about how the Lord told him people are bound, 'I'm about to set you free. Addictions that you had for years are about to fall off of you. I'm telling you, you don't have to do anything

but just receive, that's it. ... this is your night, this is your night as the high priest standing in this Holy place. I'm gonna put this shofar to my mouth and the moment I blow it every demon is coming off your shoulders, outta your mind, outta your finances. When I blow it I want you to shout like you never shouted a shout of victory and freedom that you will ... are you ready?' (He blows the whistle and everyone is screaming.) There is only one high priest and that is Jesus if it's Parsley we're in deep trouble. This is a perfect example of what Jesus warned about in Mt. 24, many will say they are Christ (anointed). This certainly implies him as our deliverer."⁷

Parsley was also so bold as to tell the Church of God's General Assembly in San Antonio that "I am superior to the forces of darkness."⁸ According to Jude 9, no one, not even the archangels of heaven, have the authority to speak this way. Jude goes on to say in verse 16 that false teachers use "great swelling words."

EASIER THAN YOU THINK

It takes no special gifts or talents to work people into a frenzy. What Parsley does can be done by anyone at all. These dynamics have been known for a long time; over 60 years ago, Elmer Clark explained how it all worked:

"The ground is laid for the gift of tongues by the well-known methods of revival evangelism. Pratt finds the explanation of successful revivalism in the laws of rhythm and crowd psychology. It is not to be supposed that evangelists know much about psychological principles in the technical sense, but by a process of trial and error many have become experts. Curiosity is subtly turned into expectancy; the advance publicity usually 'plays up' previous successes, and testimony figures prominently in sermons. The successful evangelist gets *en rapport* with his audience quickly; he is always a conserva-

tive in theology and sticks to themes on which the people are agreed. He never argues, but uses repetition instead of logic."⁹

Clark goes on to describe the other elements of mass manipulation:

"The denser the throng the more successful the revival. So much the better if people are packed closely together; evangelists always crowd them into a relatively small space, even if the room is only half-filled. Just as freedom of bodily movement enhances the feeling of independence, so the loss of such freedom in a dense crowd creates a sense of helplessness, which is conducive to the breaking down of inhibitions. This is not peculiar to revivals; cheerleaders know that there would be little rooting if the prospective cheerers were scattered about in a half-filled stadium. Then in a crowd one gains a sense of added power while the feeling of responsibility is weakened — 'Only the crowd is responsible and the crowd is big and strong and need not fear. Hence the ordinary inhibitions of prudence and propriety are thrown off, and the individual may act as a primitive being who has not reached the stage of reflection.' Autosuggestion operates powerfully under such circumstances, aided and abetted by suggestion from the platform. Coe tells of an evangelist who shouted, 'See them coming! See them coming!' when nobody had started forward, a premeditated and fraudulent device of suggestion."¹⁰

Our examination of Rod Parsley will be done against the backdrop of Scripture as we look at his checkered history, his crazed histrionics and his confused hermeneutics.

ALL IN THE FAMILY

First, we will consider the checkered history of the "Raging Prophet." In 1992, *The Columbus Dispatch* newspaper reported the filing of a lawsuit by 48-year-old Naomil Endicott against Parsley and his father, claim-

ing that the father had sexually harassed her and offered her money for sex with Parsley's knowledge.¹¹ The woman is Parsley's aunt and was an employee of his World Harvest Church.

A few months after the newspaper's report, the *Columbus Monthly* magazine provided more of the details:

"But there is trouble in Parsley's paradise. A church employee and Parsley relative is suing over what she claims were repeated incidents of sexual harassment by Parsley's father. She says she sued rather than complain to church officials because they punish boat-rockers. The Parsleys deny the claims of harassment. And the apparent financial success of the church, Parsley has acknowledged, has brought cries from members for a better accounting of how donations are spent, something Parsley adamantly refuses to provide."¹²

Tracing the twists and turns, the magazine further reveals:

"World Harvest is practically a family business. Parsley is president, and his mother, Ellen, is secretary of World Harvest Church Inc. His father, James, has worked in several capacities with the church since the 1970s, mainly overseeing construction. In the lower ranks are assorted in-laws, nieces and nephews of the Parsleys, with everyone helping each other out of difficulties and spending time together off work. That family unity ruptured in September when Parsley's aunt, Naomil Endicott, filed suit in Franklin County Municipal Court claiming James Parsley, her brother-in-law, had sexually harassed her while she worked at the church. Endicott has been with World Harvest Church from the beginning. Her brother, Ed Endicott, co-founded in 1977 the Sunrise Chapel with Rod and James Parsley, and Ms. Endicott says she began attending services regularly in 1979."¹³

Endicott was asking for compensatory and punitive damages claiming

to have secretly taped James Parsley twice making sexual comments to her. Damages could, it was reported, top \$1 million.

TAG TEAM

Endicott was not the only one in court because of the Parsley father and son team:

"Endicott's suit is one of two facing Parsley and his father. In a civil suit filed in Fairfield County Common Pleas Court, a former church member named Lewis Bungard claims that in September 1991, Rod Parsley choked him and James Parsley punched him in a dispute over some painting work Bungard had done at the Parsleys' homes. (Criminal assault charges were dropped against Rod Parsley, and his father pleaded no contest to an assault charge, was found guilty of disorderly conduct and fined \$100 plus court costs.) Bungard also charges that a \$7000 donation he made to the church to build a home for unwed mothers and a senior care center was used 'for the enrichment of Rodney Parsley, his parents and others so as to achieve an opulent lifestyle for themselves.'"¹⁴

Neither of the Parsleys would grant interviews in early April 1995 when *The Columbus Dispatch* reported:

"The pastor of the World Harvest Church and his father reached an out-of-court settlement yesterday in a civil lawsuit filed in September 1992, attorneys said. The terms of the settlement were not disclosed, said Columbus attorney Clifford O. Arnebeck, who represented Lewis Frederick Bungard of Westerville."¹⁵

It seems that a lot of Parsley's money has gone, not to the Gospel, but to lawyers and disgruntled, abused parishioners.

I DESERVE YOUR MONEY!

Parsley tells his people they should believe for millions. He makes no apology for being mercenary:

"Parsley is upfront with his congregation about the church's need for money. 'I just love to talk about money,' he told them. 'I just love to talk about your money. Let me be very clear — I want your money. I deserve it. This church deserves it.'"¹⁶

Yes, lawsuits can be costly. But there is more.

LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND SHAMELESS

Regarding Parsley's personal holdings, the *Columbus Monthly* magazine further discloses:

"Parsley, his wife, Joni, and their two young children live in a five-bedroom house they have built next to his parents' house on a 21-acre compound in northwest Fairfield County. The compound has an electronic gate at the road to discourage uninvited visitors, and stables and a corral have been built in one corner. Rod Parsley's home is worth \$857,090, say records at the Fairfield County recorder's office. His parents' home, also new, is valued at \$831,480. Each was built with a \$200,000 mortgage taken out in 1990. ... Parsley also owns a \$500,000 jet, a seven-passenger Hawker Siddeley 125."¹⁷

Now let us consider the histrionics of the "Raging Prophet." The Scriptures state, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace as in all the churches of the saints. ... Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:32-33, 40). Thus, according to Paul, order is a mark of God. James tells us that confusion is demonic (James 3:15-16).

Parsley flaunts his lack of submission to Scripture in his wild services. Viewing a Parsley meeting is more like looking at the scene in Exodus 32 when Moses came off the mountain to find the mob reveling and the people crazed and dancing. Decorum and order mark New Testament worship, not frenzy.

YEAR OF JUBILEE

Besides the general noise, screaming and general chaotic atmosphere of Parsley's meetings, Pentecostal minister and apologist Joseph R. Chambers describes, in his web site's article, other innovations of the "Raging Prophet" that add to the confusion and mass pandemonium:

"One of Parsley's main themes during 1998 has been the idea of 'celebration within the context of a church service.' He calls this the 'Year of Jubilee' and somehow ties the idea to a supernatural harvest. During these services he and the congregation put on their party hats and pull out their party whistles and hoop and holler just like they were at a carnival. The House of God becomes just as vile as a pagan temple celebrating the rites of fertility. Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders of His day and soundly rebuked them for making the House of God a den of thieves. He would do the same today to those defilers of the House of God. I can envision Him saying, 'You have made the House of God a playhouse of entertainment and folly.' It is blasphemous. ... In listening to different messages and reading material from Rod Parsley, there is a constant sense of empty, noisy hype and fleshly manipulation. Everything is geared to creating an altered, highly emotional atmosphere. Individuals that think for themselves and reason from the Scripture would be totally out of place. The people are told when to shout and when to listen."¹⁸

Party hats and party whistles? Parsley has missed entirely the biblical setting of the event. The Year of Jubilee was a decidedly *Jewish* practice found in Leviticus 25 and 27. It had to do with the very complicated legal instructions for the 50th year and the Israelites' relationship to the land, debt and slaves. It has no parallel in the New Testament and only with a little imagination could we stretch it to prefigure the Millennial or eternal

scene.¹⁹ The jubilee teaching of Parsley, that we can believe and shout our way out of debt, is a scam and a sham, and does insult to the Word of God.

However, distorting God's Word does not stop there as the "Raging Prophet" employs a repertoire of confusing hermeneutics. Parsley is a Word-Faith teacher. The basic premise of the Word-Faith idea is that faith is a force that we can use in our speaking, to get what we want. We can and should use creative words just like God did, (as He created the world from nothing by simply speaking it into existence). It is a neo-gnostic and *Star Wars* mentality.

In typical Word-Faith fashion Parsley teaches:

"In the beginning, He *spoke the Word*, and out of the nothingness of space, there was suddenly — Life! Using just His *Word*, God invented the sun, the moon, and endless galaxies of stars. ... If the Lord and His *Word* never change, and if He created life with a spoken thought, then He is still able to speak into existence whatever you need today. Healing is not hard. It is as simple and easy as saying, 'I believe your *Word*, Lord. Now speak. Create new life in me.'"²⁰

GET WHATEVER YOU WANT

Note Parsley's view, "It is as simple and easy as saying... ." He will go on to say we can cause the impossible to happen everyday.

The power that is attributed to God is then attributed to us. Our major reason for reading the Bible, Parsley says, is so that we can speak Bible phrases and bring blessings in existence:

"Learning the Godly guarantees which deal with your situation and rehearsing them over in your spirit will help you, like Peter, to possess the kind of faith that makes the impossible an everyday occurrence. ... keep His *Words* of faith and healing always before you."²¹

Faith is not a force but is a word

meaning trust. The objects of our trust are to be God and His Word. Paul, in Romans 10:17, clearly speaks of the object of our faith and trust and it is God's Word. Believing what God has spoken and finding comfort in His promises is a far cry from taking what God has spoken and thinking we can create our own reality and get anything we want by just speaking it.

Henry Thiessen explains the components of biblical faith:

“(1) The Intellectual Element. This element includes belief in the revelation of God in nature and in the historical facts of Scripture, and the doctrines taught therein as to man's sinfulness, the redemption provided in Christ, the conditions to salvation and to all the blessings promised to God's children. ... (2) The Emotional Element ... We may define the emotional element of faith as the awakening of the soul to its personal needs and to the personal applicability of the redemption provided in Christ, together with an immediate assent to these truths. ... (3) The Voluntary Element. This element of faith is the logical outgrowth of the intellectual and the emotional. If a man accepts the revelation of God and His salvation as true and comes to assent to it as applicable to himself personally, he should logically go on to appropriate it to himself.”²²

To make faith mere conviction or to have faith be conviction without facts is to align with the likes of liberal rationalist Rudolph Bultmann.²³ Parsley's "faith" is not true biblical faith. It is whistling in the dark.

We are told that Scriptures can speak comfort to us (Romans 15:4) and are to reprove, rebuke, correct and instruct us (2 Timothy 3:15-17), as we respond in faith and obedience to it but nowhere in the Bible are we told that if we will just speak Scripture out we can get what we want or create our own reality. We find in Genesis 1 that God *finished* creating and rested on the seventh day from all His labors. Creation, in the strict sense, is not going on now.

Remember too, that we are not little creators. The distinction between the Creator and what is created is sharp and clear in the Bible. Adam's dominion over the Earth had to do with his ability and power to subdue animals and nature — not create. The Fall has limited our capacity to subdue as is evident in the number of deadly diseases and natural disasters that cripple us. But there is even a darker side to this.

The frightening aspect to all this is how close the Word-Faith definition of faith comes to the *credo of raw paganism*. Self-confessed killer, drug addict and would-be vampire Rod Ferrell, who was obviously delusional from drugs and occult reading, articulated his occultic belief and it parallels the illusions of the Word-Faith commitment.

Ferrell pontificated ideas that would be acceptable in any Word-Faith church when he said:

“You just have to believe it ... Anything you want to have happen, will happen, ... You just have to want it hard enough.”²⁴

The Word-Faith view is that faith as a force — that is, words being powerful missiles of that force — is more in line with an occultic world view than a biblical one.

CONQUER THE WORLD

Parsley is also a dominionist. This too, grows out of the Word-Faith error. Dominionism teaches that powerful anointed men will bring in all the benefits (healings and miracles) of the millennium, creating a Utopia to which Christ will return. Somehow they will reverse the consequences of the Fall and totally subdue disease and the hard circumstances of life.

This teaching is also identified as “Manifest Sons of God” doctrine. It confuses glorification by intermingling it into the sanctification process. One cannot take glorification and arbitrarily impose it on the sanctification process. It is a grave and fundamental error that produces chaos. Sanctification is growth while glorification is completion or perfection, which comes in resurrection and the

eternal state (Romans 8). Parsley no longer wants “a mansion over the hilltop,” he wants it here and now.

Parsley derives the dominion teaching not from Scripture but from a “prophecy” of the late evangelist-healer Tommy Hicks (1909-1973). Hicks held mass meetings in Argentina in the mid-1950s and was a friend of Juan Peron.²⁵ What should be alarming to any Christian is that Hicks seemed to be open to occultic phenomenon.

Hicks' so-called prophecy²⁶ referred to by Parsley is wild imaginings of science fiction. He claims to have seen in a vision on July 25, 1961, that a great anointed miracle army was then about to burst on the scene, healing multitudes and invulnerable to bullets and death. This unstoppable army would be miraculously transported from place to place. Hicks must have known about the occult phenomenon called astral projection.

Will man ever be invulnerable to death? According to 1 Corinthians 15, death will not be finally destroyed until Jesus comes. Here, almost 40 years later, Hicks' imminent army has not shown up.

In the May 28, 1999, installment of his daily program (filmed in a replica of the Upper Room in Jerusalem, Israel), Parsley predicted a new “wave” coming that would empty out hospitals and anoint seemingly ordinary believers. The new wave or as it is sometime called, “the new thing,” has been touted for over 50 years (over a decade longer than Parsley has been living) and goes back to the heretical Latter Rain Movement of the late 1940s,²⁷ which, by the way, was condemned by the Assemblies of God until recently.

On the program, Parsley appealed to the Hicks “prophecy” and added the twist that we are not to look to the Book of Acts, but to a far greater, future day of miracles. Parsley's claim is that there is an end-time Church coming greater than the Church of the Apostles, which will routinely heal the sick and raise the dead.

Telling people to turn away from the Bible, the Book of Acts and the

former Apostles and Prophets and to believe men's "prophecies" as Parsley does, is a major slide to error and deception. After all, if it is not in the Bible, how do we know it's true? End-time restorationism is a chimera and a myth.

Occult researcher Kurt Koch names Tommy Hicks as dealing in "psychic shock effects" and found that his claimed healings did not last.²⁸ Though Koch was open to the possibility of miraculous healing, he was convinced that men such as Hicks did not measure up and moved more in the realm of the psychic and suggestive.²⁹

Dominionism, with its new breed of prophets, is a convoluted postmillennial scheme that makes man the Messiah and focal point. Historically, postmillennialism taught that the universal spread of the Gospel along with Christian preaching and teaching would be the moral dynamic of bringing in the kingdom.³⁰ Historical post-millennialism is Word-centered and Gospel-centered, not man-centered. Dominionism is prideful and humanistic, centering on self-appointed "super prophets and super apostles" who bring in the Kingdom. It totally confuses Christ and the Church.

Albert James Dager, of the apologetic ministry Media Spotlight, says Dominion teaching is predicated on three basic beliefs:

"1) Satan usurped man's dominion over the earth through the temptation of Adam and Eve; 2) The Church is God's instrument to take dominion back from Satan; 3) Jesus cannot or will not return until the Church has taken dominion by gaining control of the earth's governmental and social institutions."³¹

Michael Moriarty further explains Dominionism and Parsley's connection:

"In any event, the new charismatics continue to stress the need for the church to exercise dominion over society. Power-packed conferences like Dominion '90 (July 29-Aug. 3, 1990), hosted by

Pastor Rod Parsley and World Harvest Church in Columbus, Ohio, serve to raise the consciousness of the church to the responsibility to take dominion over society. Some charismatics claim that 'God told them' that Jesus will return in our generation 'if' the church becomes more responsible in its dominion pursuit."³²

Since it will take the power and the mighty coming of Jesus to establish the Kingdom, dominionism is a figment of man's imagination though a lucrative one. It's a tired old hat that is preached *ad infinitum* by the likes of other Pentecostal superstars as well, including Benny Hinn, Kenneth Hagin and Rodney Howard-Browne. The "day of creative miracles" or "the day of dominion" is always just on the horizon, but it never seems to arrive. It is, in part, the bait which keeps the devotees of these Charismatic leaders perpetually nipping at their hooks.³³

So many of the "healers" have died of major illnesses (and the living ones have sicknesses) that their teachings are a joke to those who know better. A genuine and thorough reading of the Book of Revelation leaves no doubt that it is the "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" who will bring in the perfect and final Kingdom (Revelation 19:11-20:5). Man cannot miraculously recreate the earth and bring in heaven.

HOLY RAGS: THE NEW RELICS

Another staple of the Parsley ministry is the use of prayer cloths. Because this gimmick has become so widespread, Inner-City Christian Discernment Ministry has begun to catalog and collect prayer cloths from different healing ministries. Just the names associated with this outlandish fraud ought to make one leery: Robert Tilton, Marilyn Hickey, Peter Popoff, Rod Parsley, Jim Whittington and others. ICCDM describes Parsley's use of the relic:

"Rod Parsley is a fast rising star in Pentecostal/charismatic circles. ... sent right to my home is a glossy packet stating 'Release

the anointing ... Receive Your Miracle.' Lo-and-behold enclosed is a MIRACLE PRAYER CLOTH and I am supposed to: (1) **RECEIVE** this prayer cloth as your point of contact (2) **PLACE** this prayer cloth in the envelope provided and (3) **BELIEVE** God to receive YOUR miracle ... I am to do these 3 things and RUSH my MIRACLE PRAYER CLOTH back to Pastor Rod (hopefully with a donation) and wait for my miracle to manifest. 'As you send me your prayer cloth and your most generous gift toward our Breakthrough ministry, I will send you my 3-tape audio cassette series, "Releasing the Anointing ... Your Breakthrough to Victory.'" **This is nothing but a shameless con to transfer dollars from the pockets of God's people who in many cases have a genuine need but lack biblical understanding and thus fall prey to ministers of this type.**³⁴

DOING THE TWIST

Parsley may make a weak appeal to Acts 19:12 but only serious Scripture twisting can make it fit. Verse 11 specifically says that this was unusual (as was the one-time event of touching the hem of Christ's garment or creating loaves and fishes). Paul did not send out cloths to have people send them back for a corporate anointing as described in the literature of Parsley. This unusual or extraordinary miracle was just that, a very uncommon occurrence.

Stressing the uniqueness of the Acts 19 event, Albert Barnes says:

"*Special miracles.* Miracles that were remarkable; that were not common, or that were very unusual (*ou tas tuchousas*.) This expression is classic Greek."³⁵

To further underscore the dramatic one-time nature of Acts 19:11-12, Thomas Edgar points out:

"The word for miracles (*dunamis*) occurs ten times and does not occur after Acts 19:11. ... The frequency of miracle-working seems to have been on a decline

during the lifetime of the apostles."³⁶

Steve Febraro, in an Internet article entitled "Rod Parsley and Acts 19 — 'Send In The Cloths,'" concludes:

"Is the practice of sending prayer cloths biblical? No! Is the practice of praying over prayer cloths biblical? No! Does Acts 19, teach anything of a 'corporate anointing?' No! Instead of validating Parsley's prayer cloth dictum, Acts 19 disproves his teaching on every point. This particular error is so glaring that anyone who takes the time to read Acts 19 will discover these errors for themselves. Folks, keep your cloths at home. Use them to dust furniture. Or if you have already sent a cloth in, maybe the next one you decide to send in should be used to dust off your Bible instead."³⁷

Sir Robert Anderson so vividly reminds us:

"I may add that among Christians it is pestilently evil to make the exceptional experience of some the rule of faith for all. The Word of God is our guide, and not the experience of fellow-Christians; and when this is ignored the practical consequences are disastrous. The annals of 'faith healing,' as it is called, are rich in cases of mimetic or hysterical disease, but about the spiritual wreckage due to failures innumerable they are silent."³⁸

In the popular film trilogy, *Back to the Future*, lead character Marty McFly goes back in time. The Church is going back in time to the Dark Ages in following the antics of Parsley and others. Philip Schaff recounts that in Europe, circulated pieces of linen were considered holy and miraculous because they had come into contact with the dead bodies of saints.³⁹ These relics and holy rags are no better than Parsley's "prayer cloths" supposedly made holy by his touch and the corporate anointing of others. It is superstitious nonsense.

KILLING THE DEVIL?

Another misleading and dangerous

practice that Parsley promotes is the 40-day fast. He claims that the 40-day fast is going to become commonplace in the life of a believer. Parsley claims to have led 6000 people in a 40-day fast with the following benefits:

"... you kill Beelzebub, you kill the fly father, the cycle of the birthing process of the fly is forty days. That's the reason stuff you got rid of comes back ... You didn't kill the larvae. But God said you fast 40 days. When you spray a field, you spray it for 40 days. It not only kills the flies but the ones they were gonna give birth to."⁴⁰

So here we have the teaching that we can kill Beelzebub (Satan) and his demon offspring (as if Satan gave birth to demons). Since Parsley and a cast of 6000 have accomplished such a pretentious effort, are not Satan and his offspring annihilated? Totally gone? Why would anyone else have to fast?

First of all, spirits cannot be killed (Luke 20:36). Secondly, the final end of Satan is recorded for us in the Book of Revelation. It will be accomplished by our all-powerful Savior Jesus Christ. The weapons of our warfare are described in Ephesians 6 and a 40-day fast is not there. In spite of Parsley's rantings, Satan's demons cannot be killed by believers.

DANGER AHEAD

The 40-day fast is a dangerous practice promoted in the *Dake Annotated Study Bible* (and by aberrant groups such as the End-Time Handmaidens). In a previous edition of *The Quarterly Journal*, PFO examined the numerous heresies promoted by the controversial *Dake Annotated Study Bible*. We noted that Finis Dake believed and taught that the prolonged fasts expelled all toxic poisons from the body and left the breath as sweet as a baby's. We also noted that Jews fasted once a week with documentation that the Jewish fast was simply cutting down on amounts of food and was never understood to be total.⁴¹ Further, there were only five fasts commanded in the Old Testament. Colossians would militate against

required fasting.

Forty days of fasting was out of the ordinary, not normative. It was miraculous, not routine. Brad Young touches on the facts:

"Like Moses and Elijah, who fasted for forty days, Jesus abstains from both food and water, relying on divine sustenance during this period. ... Thus it was considered miraculous for someone to go without food and water for forty days. Only God could sustain Jesus for such a fast."⁴²

In allowing this written record of the event, Jesus was showing His Jewish audience that He was at least on a par with the greatest of their Prophets. What would it show if everyone could do it? Apparently Jesus did this only once that we know.

SIN SICK BLOOD

Parsley also has a strange view of sin, human blood and the blood of Christ. Parsley teaches that sin is in the physical blood. He says of Adam: "That single exposure to Satan was all that was needed to transmit the communicable disease of sin into the bloodline of humanity."⁴³

The Scriptures are silent as to exactly where sin and the sin nature is located. Christ spoke of sin coming out of "the heart of man" and meant man's innermost being (Matthew 15:18-20). He did not say sin is in the blood. It is unwise to speak where Scripture is silent. Out of this first error Parsley builds his second error regarding sin in the blood of Jesus.

JESUS — SINNER OR SINLESS?

Parsley teaches that Jesus was "injected" with sin and that His blood once tainted by sin became immunized and then capable of giving us salvation and healing. At the outset he mistakes identification for identity.

As he puts it:

"The nails that pounded into Christ's hands and feet that day 'injected' Him with every blatant

iniquity, every subtle sin, every vile act that mankind had ever or would ever commit."⁴⁴

The Bible never hints in any way that Christ's blood changed in composition. It is just called blood throughout the Scriptures. Peter called it "precious blood" (1 Peter 1:19) and Paul calls it God's own blood (Acts 20:28). In the resurrection it appears that the glorified body did not depend on a blood supply (Luke 24:39). That Christ *shed* His blood is the all important factor.

Yet Parsley says:

"Hanging from those nails, Jesus was also deliberately infected with all manner of sickness and sin, so to bring about salvation and healing, through His divine, immunized blood."⁴⁵

Parsley comes perilously close to saying Jesus became a sinner.

Though Parsley does not mention 2 Corinthians 5:21, he may be like other Word-Faith proponents confusing its meaning. Paul says: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might be the righteousness of God."

How could Jesus "be sin for us"? This has always been understood by all major commentators and commentators to relate to the sin offering of the Old Testament. It means that Jesus became a sin offering for us, not that He had to become inherently sinful or carry sin in His blood. Nothing intrinsically changed in the sacrificial lamb. Isaiah 53:5 tells us that the chastisement of our peace was "upon" Him not "in" Him. Isaiah 53:6 says the Lord laid our iniquity "on" Him, not "in" Him. Blood that becomes infected with everyone's sin and disease and then is somehow immunized is a figment of Parsley's imagination.

J. R. Dummelow shares the sense of 2 Corinthians 5:21:

"**Made him to be sin for us**] Christ had to bear not the guilt, but the burden of sin. He bore its penalty not as a punishment, but as the innocent suffers for the guilty; feeling all its shame and

horror, but free from the sense of guilt and degradation. Hence St. Paul says not, 'He hath made Him to be a sinner' but 'He hath made Him to be sin.'"⁴⁶

Reminding us that 2 Corinthians also says, "He knew no sin," Albert Barnes notes:

"Literally it is, 'he has made him sin, or a sin offering,' ... Nor (2) can it mean that he was a *sinner*, for it is said in immediate connection that he 'knew no sin' and it is everywhere said he was holy, harmless, undefiled. ... if the declaration that he was made 'sin' (*hamartian*) does not mean that he was sin itself, or a sinner, or guilty, then it must mean that he was a *sin-offering* — an offering or a sacrifice for sin; and this is the interpretation which is now generally adopted by expositors."⁴⁷

Adam Clarke gets into the linguistics of 2 Corinthians 5:21:

"...it signifies a 'sin offering,' or 'sacrifice for sin,' and answers to the *chattaah* and *chattath* of the Hebrew text; which signifies both 'sin' and 'sin offering' in a great variety of places in the Pentateuch. The Septuagint translate the Hebrew word by *hamartia* in ninety-four places in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, where a 'sin offering' is meant; and where our version translates the word, not 'sin,' but an 'offering for sin.' Had our translators attended to their own method of translating the word in other places where it means the same as here, they would not have given this false view of a passage which has been made the foundation of a most blasphemous doctrine; viz., that our sins were imputed to Christ, and that He was a proper Object of the indignation of divine justice, because He was blackened with imputed sin; and some have proceeded so far in this blasphemous career as to say that Christ may be considered as the greatest of sinners, because all the sins of mankind, or of the elect, as they say, were imputed

to Him, and reckoned as His own. Thus they have confounded sin with the punishment due to sin."⁴⁸

Jesus did not have to have His blood infected or immunized. All He had to do was *shed* it. Jesus Himself said: "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is *shed* for you" (Luke 22:20).

Leon Morris rightly observes:

"When the evidence is surveyed as a whole, there can be no reasonable doubt. Blood points not to life set free, but to life given up in death."⁴⁹

HEALING ON DEMAND?

To say that Jesus had to suffer all our diseases on the cross is an old error referred to as healing in the atonement. While healing *is* in the atonement in the *ultimate* sense (Romans 8 and Revelation 21), the full benefits of glorified, deathless bodies will only be realized in heaven. We owe everything (all spiritual and physical blessings) to the atonement of Jesus but we do not receive all of those blessings right now. Scripture makes that abundantly clear.

Parsley has evidence in his own home that his teaching on healing is off-base — *his son Austin has been diagnosed "with Asberger Syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism."*⁵⁰ God has provided evidence of Parsley's own errors but for whatever reason he refuses to see it. It is sad that Parsley can so compartmentalize that he lays teaching on his followers but has a different reality at home. Parsley shared in a sermon televised last June 4 that his son was diagnosed at the Cleveland Clinic and reports while he is making improvement "we're not all the way out of the woods but we're on our way."

Added to that is the fact that as much as Parsley rants about God's Kingdom come in our body, he still has a deaf section and a signer in his church. As kindly as we can, we say, *physician heal thyself*.

Richard Mayhue, Dean of Master's Seminary in Sun Valley, California, dissects the false teaching of healing in the atonement (that is, that healing

can be claimed now just as forgiveness of sins is claimed) in his book *The Healing Promise*.

Mayhue carefully exegetes the Scriptures, especially Isaiah 53, to give us his views:

“Both Leviticus and Hebrews demonstrate that in God’s mind the atonement dealt primarily with sin, not sickness. It had everything to do with our sin problem and the redemption needed to remove sin so that we might stand eternally before a holy God. Christ’s atonement paid the due penalty for sin, which involved God’s wrath being poured out upon Jesus Christ. Clearly the major emphasis of Isaiah 53 centers on spiritual salvation.”⁵¹

Then Mayhue unpacks the word “iniquity”:

“Note that the word ‘iniquity’ is used four times in Isaiah 53 and identifies the passage’s major emphasis. In 53:5, Christ was crushed for our iniquities. According to 53:6, the Lord ‘has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.’ He will bear our iniquities (53:11), and He Himself bore the sins of many (53:12; cf. Hebrews 9:28). *The primary thrust of Isaiah 53 is on the spiritual and the eternal effects of sin, not on its physical and immediate effects upon the body.*”⁵²

Further Mayhue shows:

“We could look at such godly examples as Abraham, Isaac, Daniel, Paul and Timothy to show that God’s greatest saints endured sicknesses and also eventually died. Therefore we can biblically conclude that while there is a related aspect of physical healing in the atonement, it won’t be applied until *after* death and the redemption of our bodies by resurrection (Romans 8:23).”⁵³

Mayhue then presents this summary:

“Isaiah 53 refers to the atonement and its redemptive value,

not its therapeutic effect in a physical sense. Four lines of evidence support this conclusion: 1. The idea of the atonement in Leviticus and Hebrews clearly applies to salvation. 2. The context of Isaiah 53 focuses primarily on the atonement’s provision for sin. 3. The theological context of Christ’s death and salvation centers on sin. 4. Matthew, Peter and the Ethiopian eunuch understood Isaiah 53 in reference to sin. All the scriptural evidence affirms that Isaiah 53 deals with the spiritual being of man. Its major emphasis is on sin, not sickness. It focuses on the moral cause of sickness, which is sin, and not the immediate removal of one of sin’s results — sickness.”⁵⁴

When it is all said and done, Parsley preaches a different Gospel. Paul clearly defines the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. Paul says in verse 1: “I declare to you the Gospel.” In declaring the Gospel, Paul then defines it “that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” The objective side of the Gospel is all that Jesus purchased for us in His death and resurrection. The experimental side of the Gospel is that when we trust in Christ and Christ alone, all the eternal merits of Christ — sins forgiven, a place in God’s family, and an ultimate resurrection become ours.

Parsley, in his book, *Renamed and Redeemed*, asserts: “JESUS IS NOT SICK — I DON’T HAVE TO BE SICK.”⁵⁵ Yes, but Jesus is God — God immortal and glorified. I am not God — I am not immortal or glorified — yet. And I will never be God.

GOSPEL OF GOLD AND GREED

Parsley’s “gospel” is the gospel of prosperity. He claims that the Gospel is our ability to work miracles and be rich. It is a distortion of the worst kind. His “good news” is that the poor can be wealthy.

In *God’s Answer to Insufficient Funds*, Parsley affirms his false gospel:

“For you to sit in physical bondage is to deny the power of the gospel. ... Most people would have no trouble shouting whatsoever if I said, ‘To remain in the bondage of sin and death is to deny the power of the gospel.’ But if I said ‘What about healing for your body?’ the amens would not be quite so loud. If I said the same thing about poverty and financial bondage, it would get as quiet as a tomb. If I said that for you to live from paycheck to paycheck is to deny the power of the gospel, many of you would get angry. In Luke 4:18 ... Notice there was an anointing to preach good news to the poor. A lot of people don’t like to look at that because good news to a poor man is that he doesn’t have to be poor anymore. We have multitudes saved, delivered and filled with the Holy Ghost, and many are healed, yet over 90% of the church of Jesus Christ are living in absolute financial bondage. All the while, Jesus is saying, ‘I’ve been anointed to preach the good news to the poor.’ ... You have held back the flow. You have denied the perpetual propulsion of power that could deliver you from not only sin and sickness but from the horrible stench of poverty.”⁵⁶

So the Gospel in Parsley’s view is telling the poor man “he doesn’t have to be poor anymore.” Poverty is a stench. He is confusing gold with God. Jesus never said there was anything sinful about being poor. In fact, He warned that being rich may throw one into idolatry: “No man can serve two masters. ... you cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). We may seek to relieve poverty and improve our lot but Paul reminded us of the dangers and snares that accompany riches (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

Parsley teaches that the tithe and offering are “seed.” If we sow our seed, we can expect a huge financial return. In fact, we will not only

double and triple our money, we will get it back one hundred times:

“People have said that it’s selfish to ask God to give a hundredfold return on the seeds sown in the financial realm. No it’s selfish *not* to expect the hundredfold return. ... The anointing is on the seed. If you will divest, God will invest.”⁵⁷

God is recast as almost a Wall Street broker.

This is a shocking example of blatant promotion of greed. Our prayer ought to be:

“Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches — Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny you, And say, ‘who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:8-9).

Did Jesus promise Paul material riches and health? In Acts 9:16, Jesus says: “I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” Paul reminds us that we are “blessed with every *spiritual* blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

MISSING THE POINT

Parsley further misleads by improperly defining words. He claims that: “The Greek word translated salvation here [Romans 1:16] is the word ‘sozo’.

It means ‘complete deliverance’.”⁵⁸ The word salvation is actually the Greek word *soteria*.⁵⁹ *Soza* is translated “save” or to save, and like *soteria* can mean a number of different things depending on the context. It can mean deliverance from danger but William E. Vine lays out the primary usages of *soza*:

“(a) of material and temporal deliverance from danger, suffering, etc., ... (b) of the spiritual and eternal salvation granted immediately by God to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, ... (c) of the present experiences of God’s power to deliver from the bondage of sin, ... (d) of the future deliverance of believers at

the Second Coming of Christ for His saints, ... (e) of the deliverance of the nation of Israel at the Second Advent of Christ, ... (f) inclusively for all the blessings bestowed by God on men in Christ.”⁶⁰

After reading of the richness and fullness that Vine unfolds, we can see that Parsley has short-changed us to try to get across his limited view to bolster his false gospel of prosperity and healing on demand.

Parsley can scream, shout, stomp, prance, obfuscate and mislead but it is all noise and no substance. It is froth without real content which helps to pump money into his empire.

By contrast, Jesus was gentle and would not cry out nor lift His voice in the streets (Matthew 12:19-20). Jesus, as well, was *truth*. No one could be more unlike Jesus in his raging, his legal settlements, his false teaching, his lavish lifestyle and his false gospel than Rod Parsley.

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GOD'S SUPERSTARS

(continued from page 2)

Sadly, the Church has lost its will to discern. We accept, without a moment's hesitation, nearly every new fad or craze and become alarmed only by the hoaxes we should be ignoring. We hastily swallow the "signs and wonders" diet fed by the spiritual elite. We're all too eager to trust their extravagant (and even bizarre) declarations. There's no need to check out their claims — after all, they are the champions of the faith who personally dialogue with God Himself. Why would they lie to us?

While the caller classified Hinn and other notable Charismatic favorites as "superstars," others depict them similarly with designations of equal or greater stature. For example, Charismatic biographer Roberts Liardon dignifies many bygone divine healers and miracle workers into a prestigious class known as "God's Generals."

Liardon's roster is filled with scandalous and unsavory personalities — much like the modern-day healing evangelists. His list includes William Branham, Smith Wigglesworth, Kathryn Kuhlman, Aimee Semple McPherson, Charles Parham, A.A. Allen and several others. Liardon claims his research into the lives of these men and women was no less than a divine appointment. "Roberts Liardon was commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to study the lives of God's great 'generals,'" as boasted in his personal resume found on the series' back cover.

But has a new beginning come to the Church and has the world been affected by the lives and ministry of these "extraordinary men and women" as it is so boldly claimed? Robert Liichow, himself a former participant in hyper-Charismatic churches for 15 years, challenges such assertions.

On his Inter-City Christian Discernment Ministry's web site (<http://www.discernment.org>) he painfully points out that for all the hoopla generated by past and present

Charismatic superstars, "It's not working for them either!" In Liichow's insightful article, he reveals "the saddest 'cut' of all is the FACT that the majority of what the Word of Faith/Prophetic Movement charismaniacs teach does not even work in their own sorry lives."

Liichow catalogs the untimely deaths of prominent Charismatics and/or Pentecostals such as Word-Faith publisher Doyle "Buddy" Harrison (son-in-law to Kenneth Hagin), popular author Jamie Buckingham, Vineyard leader John Wimber and his son Chris, and Hobart Freeman. With the exception of Freeman, all these healing vanguards sought the counsel and treatment of medical professionals. This was in despite of all their "signs and wonders" and "positive confession" theology. The legacy of most of Liardon's erstwhile "generals" fares no better.

Liichow further outlines the faith-denying, yet life-saving medical treatment received by other celebrated leaders including Joyce Meyer (breast cancer), R.W. Schambach (heart bypass), Mack Timberlake (throat cancer) and others. Yet the confusion does not stop with these superstars not being able to practice what they preach. A life with high standards of morality and distinct biblical sanctification is in short supply in these superstars when one considers the divorces, lawbreaking and unabashed hustling of donations.

Moreover, while many lead lifestyles that equal or rival those of Hollywood or sport celebrities (like living in palatial mansions, being chauffeured in a limousine, jet-setting around the world and being worshiped by a myriad of fans), such prestige is certainly no indication of the status of "God's superstar." To think otherwise is nothing less than an illusion.

Stature with God is not based upon fame, a following, financial wealth, by way of best-selling books and tapes or in building a massive ministry. As with worldly celebrities, success is fleeting and temporary. Even for "Christian" superstars, fame is equally elusive. On the horizon, there will always be some innovative player who will eclipse one or more of the current superstars