

dermine the deity of Jesus. These apologists conclude that the Faith Teachers attempt to promote man to godhood when they use the phrase "little gods." I disagree. After examining numerous books and sermons by Word/Faith teachers, I do not think the criticism is justified.

The Christian Research Institute, on its daily radio show "The Bible Answer Man," repeatedly asserts that Word/Faith teachers believe men can become gods. However, in *Heresy Hunters* I refer to an article in the Institute's own magazine, the *CRI Journal*, which addresses this issue in some measure. A well-known and highly

respected conservative Bible scholar, Dr. Gordon Lewis, wrote an article in the *Journal* entitled, "Are Mormons Christians?" He showed that it is impossible to understand an individual's position on complex issues simply by repeating a line from his overall teaching. He cited a Mormon

scholar who accused Eastern Orthodoxy, the Word Faith Teachers, and C. S. Lewis of teaching about God what Mormonism teaches—that men may become gods.

Lewis disagrees that those three entities teach Mormon-like theology. He says when Christian writers speak of becoming like God, they mean becoming like Him *in some respects*. That does not mean they think men can become like God in *essence*. Dr. Lewis points out that Eastern Orthodoxy, Word Faith Teachers, and C. S. Lewis *do* believe man is radically changed by redemption, but he says they *do not* have a view of God similar to Mormonism (i.e., "As man now is, God once was; As God now is, man may be.") He says Eastern Orthodoxy indeed emphasizes that the redeemed man undergoes changes which renew him in the image and likeness of God, but he continues, "There is a difference between being like God *in some respects* ...and being God by *nature*."

He makes the point that the late Christian author, C. S. Lewis, can be made to *appear* to teach that men evolve to godhood. All we have to do is quote him out of context. Gordon Lewis writes:

Did C. S. Lewis support an LDS concept of deification? In *The Weight of Glory*, the imaginative writer uses

figurative language to express the radical changes in believers from the dullest and most uninteresting persons in this life to "gods" and "goddesses" in glory. He must be understood metaphorically in view of his general defense of theism. Similarly, when in *Mere Christianity* he says we turn permanently into new little Christ's sharing God's power, joy, knowledge, and eternity, he is speaking in terms of our likeness to God being renewed. And in *The Screwtape Letters* his claim that God intends to fill heaven with "little replicas of himself" refers to replicas in

i•ro•ny.

1.a. The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to their literal meaning. b. An expression or utterance marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent and intended meaning. c. A literary style employing such contrasts for humorous or rhetorical effect.

—American Heritage Dictionary

certain qualities, not to becoming literal gods.³

Gordon Lewis also quotes C. S. Lewis in the following, very telling, way:

The command, "Be ye perfect," is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He (God) is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were "gods" and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine.⁴

It is not necessary to point out that virtually no Evangelical scholar thinks C. S. Lewis was unorthodox on the subject of God's nature, but these statements—taken out of context—could be used to make him appear cultish. That is why it is essential not only to quote a man's *words*, but to understand and report what he *means* by those words.

Haggling over Words Instead of Clarifying Meanings

In *Heresy Hunters*, I suggest that the

real essence of heresy is division. Those who divide the Church may, themselves, be the heretics. Church Father, Hilary of Poitiers, put it this way, "Heresy lies in the sense assigned, not in the word written; and the guilt is that of the expositor." He meant that the original scripture was accurate and its meaning intact. Heresy occurs when someone comes along and assigns a sense to a Bible passage that God did not intend. The very same thing is true for an *individual's* "word." If we assign a meaning to someone's words that he himself doesn't assign, we are guilty of doing violence to his text. That is exactly what we do

to people when we take their thoughts and words out of context and assign unwarranted meanings to them.

When the heresy hunters assign to the Word/Faith teaching the idea that Jesus is not God, I believe they are doing violence to Word/Faith theology. Of course, some Faith

Teachers may *not* think Jesus is God, but, in my studied opinion, Kenneth Copeland is not one of them, nor is it the general teaching of the Word/Faith leadership.

It is very wrong to try to read unusual meanings into Copeland's words from the "Incarnation" tape. His regular teaching on this subject underscores the fact that he *does* teach that Jesus is fully God. Beyond that, he teaches the orthodox hypostatic union of Christ—that Jesus is both fully God *and* fully man.

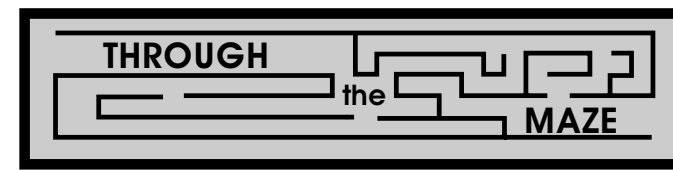
Out-of-context quotations result in general misunderstanding. Misunderstanding leads to suspicion and separation. We must listen to each other carefully. We must each desire to understand what the other is *really* saying. If we cannot do this, we will see the greatest division ever to split the Body of Christ.

1. Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, 1993, pp. 137-39)

2. Kenneth Copeland, "The Incarnation," Tape 01-0402, Kenneth Copeland Ministries, Fort Worth, TX.

3. Gordon Lewis, "A Summary Critique: Are Mormons Christians?" *Christian Research Journal* (Fall 1992), p. 36.

4. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, New York: MacMillan, 1974, pp. 174-175.



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Update!

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Out-of-Context Quotes— Not Legitimate Evidence

The meaning behind the words is important

Imagine a Chinese businessman walking down a street in Beijing. He notices a scrap of paper on the sidewalk. In his native language he reads the words, "Jesus Christ said, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.'" (Matt. 10:34)

If the oriental businessman were ignorant of the teachings of Christ, he might develop, from his scrap of information, a warped picture of Jesus and His message. Perhaps he might even begin to quote Jesus to his neighbors: "Jesus Christ, the hero of the Christians, was a very violent man. He said—and it's recorded in the Bible—that his goal was not peace, but violence!"

Having formed this negative opinion of Jesus, the man might begin to look for other such out-of-context statements to validate his theory of "The Violent Jesus." He certainly

would find plenty of examples. He would discover that the Bible states that the Son of Man ultimately will send His angels into the earth to gather those who

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are offenders and cast them into a furnace of fire where "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 13:42) If he were to focus only on the verses in

the Bible which speak of the Lord's righteous judgement, he could, indeed, paint a distasteful picture of Jesus.

Our oriental businessman might pursue his study of Christianity by prejudicially selecting only the unusual or condemning words of Christ to study. If he became thoroughly convinced that Christian teaching is dangerous, and if he were highly motivated, he might mount a public relations campaign to warn others of the dangers of Christianity. Of course, he would not be warning them against Christianity, but against what he *thought* was Christianity. If he were a real zealot, he might go so far as to purchase radio time to broadcast his picture of Christ as a fierce, bloodthirsty man. He might even hire someone to read the quo

Does Kenneth Copeland Really Think Jesus Christ is Not God?

A popular Christian book states the following about the teaching of Kenneth Copeland:

Almost all cults and world religions compromise the deity of Christ, and the Faith movement is no exception...Astonishingly [Kenneth] Copeland deifies man and demotes Jesus Christ. It is mind-boggling to hear Copeland assert:

What (why) does God have to pay the price for this thing? (The price of sin) He has to have a man that is like that first one. It's got to be all man. He's got to be all man. He cannot be a God and come storming in here with attributes and dignities that are not common to man. He can't do that. It's not legal. ...[Copeland] clearly divests Christ of every shred of deity.

If John 10:33 is not enough to convince Copeland that Jesus was indeed God in human flesh, how about John 5:18?...Or what about John 8:58...?'

tations from the Bible. Perhaps he would go so far as to hire an actor to read the words with great venom. He might even introduce the words with eerie music, to make them sound even more sinister.

Informed Christians would know that the man was *misrepresenting* the whole thrust of Jesus' life and ministry, but they would be hard pressed to make the man understand why he was wrong. After all, he was being *technically* correct; Jesus really *did* say those words. Nevertheless, Christians know the quotations actually do not characterize Christ in an accurate way. They misrepresent the heart of who He really is. Christians know Jesus to be the loving Messiah who desires that sinners escape the punishment of their sin. It is true, He *is* the Lion of Judah, but just as truly, He is the Lamb of God.

Out-of-Context Statements

In my book, *Heresy Hunters: Character Assassination in the Church*, I deal with the concept of using out-of-context statements to assassinate

the character of other Christians. People can use such statements to cruelly misrepresent what a person really believes.

Politicians do it all the time. Unfortunately, sometimes Christians—even Christian leaders—resort to such tactics

What Copeland Really Said About the Incarnation of Christ

So what does God have to have to pay the price for this thing? He has to have a man that was like that first one. He's got to be a man. He's got to be all man. He can't be a God and come storming in here with attributes and dignities that are not common to man. He can't do that, it's not legal. You see, God had angels that could come storming in here. He's got angels that are bigger than Satan, did you know that? Michael's proved that on an occasion or so—and just stomp him good. The Spirit of God, is certainly—the Holy Spirit Himself—is certainly more capable than Satan. He's the one that kicked him out of heaven in the first place. Why didn't the Holy Ghost just come in here and just take over things and turn this thing around? He's not a man that He should do a man's job.

There had to be a man, but it also had to be man as pure as that first one, and there wasn't anybody left like that but God. Now somehow or another there's got to be an incarnation, there's got to be a man filled with God—there's got to be a God-man come into the earth.

How we going to get Him in here? Well, there wasn't but one way. And God had that way hidden until time to do it. His Word provided it. That way was to have that man born without the seed of a man in Him, He had to have the Blood of God in His veins. And He was born, conceived by the Holy Ghost in a virgin. And it worked.

And you hear Jesus say, "Son of Man," Now here's what I want you to get before we read our Scripture today: "Son of Man." The Hebrew words are Ben Adam. Son of Adam. Or, just like Adam.

See what He does? The great God of the universe, the greatness, the only spotless thing left that God has to get this job done with—the only sacrifice left—the only thing. God's paying a precious price for this thing. The only thing He has that can qualify and fulfill it.

And He steps from that position of universal hierarchy in the heavens down here into this footstool, if you please, and associates and identifies Himself with your race and mine. And calls Himself the son of Adam.

Now get a hold of that. Boy, that's real. Now God didn't have to do that, but He did. Do you know why? Because He's in love with you, that's why! ²

to make their points. When they do so, I'm sure they attempt to justify their actions. Perhaps they convince them-

selves that the person they are abusing is so theologically off base that the end justifies the means.

In my book I document several examples of the sin of quoting people out-of-context, but I found one of the most blatant examples only after I wrote the book. One of the most misrepresented targets of the Heresy Hunters is Kenneth Copeland. I don't agree with everything Copeland teaches; neither am I suggesting that everything taught by the so-called Faith Teachers is right. Nevertheless, I worry about attempts to discredit the Word/Faith Movement (or anyone for that matter) by using out-of-context statements.

The box on page one of this newsletter features one of the worst examples of an out-of-context quotation I have seen. This quote would lead us to believe that Copeland doubts Jesus is fully God. However, this quotation is taken out of context and totally misrepresents Copeland. In the actual sermon, Copeland—far from making heretical statements—is really making *orthodox* statements about the

Incarnation—the appearance of God in human flesh. To see what I mean, read the out-of-context quotation from page

one, then read it in context from the box on page two. It is disappointing to see Copeland represented so inaccurately.

Why, I wonder, did the author handle the quote in this way? Did he knowingly mishandle it or was he ignorant of what Copeland actually said? I'm not sure which mistake is worse.

Worldly Wisdom

One of the biggest problems with out-of-context quotations is that they can be used to attempt to "prove" almost anything. Unscrupulous commentators resort to out-of-context remarks because they want to win arguments, when winning is more important than arriving at truth. We are all aware of the secular news media's penchant for misquoting public figures.

In a recent example, a reporter quoted US Senator Dan Coats (Rep. Ind.) as saying that (then) Vice-President Dan Quayle was "not representative of his generation." The reporter made it sound as if Senator Coats were disparaging the Vice President when—in context—the Senator was actually *commending* the Vice President. He was saying that Dan Quayle was not representative of his generation in that he had never been a radical hippie: "Dan Quayle," the Senator said, "did not occupy a college administration building, burn the flag, join the drug culture or protest at the 1968 Democratic Convention." In a letter to the *Washington Post*, Coats went on to ask, "How is it possible to get from my

own words and intention to this sweeping, negative conclusion? Search me." The same book which quotes Ken-

Copeland Statements His Critics Never Quote

He was made to be sin, for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God. He wasn't any less man. If anything he is more man than any man that ever walked. Not half man, half God—All man, all God. Praise the Lord! "Spiritual Power in the Physical Body" (Tape 01-0610)

There had to be a man. He had to be all man. He couldn't be just part man, that's not legal. He had to be all God. He couldn't be just part God, 'cause that wouldn't work. "What Happened from the Cross to the Throne." (Tape 02-0017)

Now God, through the shed blood, or the sacrifice that was put on the altar of the cross remitted the sin of the world. He destroyed Satan's ability and he destroyed his authority over mankind by pouring out his own blood. "The Incarnation" (Tape 01-0402)

The Prince of Heaven—God Almighty—gave up his divine health in order for you—in order to take your sickness and bear your sins and diseases in his own body on the cross. "The Incarnation" (Tape 01-0402)

When was Jesus born of God? It was not when he was born in Bethlehem, that's just when he took upon himself the flesh of man. He'd always been the Son of god. Always, forever. Always been one with God forever.

"The Inner Image of the Covenant" (Tape 01-4406)

neth Copeland out of context to prove he doesn't think Jesus is God, also suggests that he believes "God is the biggest failure of all time." It is true that Copeland uttered those words, but *what does he mean by them?* We must ask ourselves if those words really mean that Copeland has no respect for God and deems Him to be a failure. If Copeland believes that, he is not a Christian, let

alone a minister of the gospel.

Of course, that is *not* what he means! In context, he is addressing the fact that people get down on themselves because of their personal failures. So he reminds us that God Himself is a "failure" in the sense that He "failed" when, in Copeland's words, "He lost His top-ranking, most anointed angel; the first man He ever created; the first woman He ever created; the whole earth and all the fullness therein; a third of the angels, at least—that's a big loss, man." He made that statement on a "Praise-a-Thon" program on Trinity Broadcasting Network in April, 1988.

Obviously, the failures here were Lucifer, Adam, Eve, and the demon angels, *not God*. Copeland is simply saying that God has suffered disappointment and can understand our human condition. It is ludicrous to try to suggest from the text that Copeland sees some flaw in God in all this.

Copeland is simply using a rhetorical form to communicate something about the heart of God. This is a technique pastors have used throughout the ages and certainly is not an attack on the character or nature of God.

Slash-and-Burn Journalism

In *Heresy Hunters*, I addressed some popular Christian apologists who have used out-of-context statements to try to prove that the Word/Faith teachers un