

CHRISTIAN FRAUDS

David C F Wright DD

The title Christian frauds seems a contradiction in terms but, as with any other organisation, there are, sadly, crooks among Christians.

What is very worrying is that there are Christians who are paedophiles, thieves, deceivers and who live immoral lives with acts of infidelity and gross sexual misconduct whereas they have preached against such things.

The general public has this notion that all Christians are, or are supposed to be, faultless and pure and that, if any Christian steps out of line, such Christians are censured, often without mercy, and it is assumed by some that all Christians are just as bad.

The accounts of Roman Catholic priests abusing altar boys and other children is proved, although the Catholic Church tried to suppress it. Such matters are both criminal and disgraceful and the perpetrators of such crimes should receive the maximum sentence and, in my view, not be allowed to have any Christian office thereafter but be encouraged to repent and make restitution.

I am advised that a large percentage of Jehovah Witnesses are paedophiles. I do not class them as Christians since they are far away from the Bible with regard to vital doctrines.

I am surprised at the amount of Christians who have a different approach to me. Some claim that forgiveness must be automatic and that we must not be hard on offenders. Harriet Harman's Act of Parliament seems to advocate understanding and sympathy for offenders so that, for example, you cannot apparently sack an employee for theft but need to be caring towards him. We seem to have tribunals to even uphold the rights of employees who are sacked for misconduct!

Of the most notorious Christians frauds, it is interesting to note that 98% of them are Elim, Assemblies of God, Full Gospel Business Men's Association members and other Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, some of which have started their own churches or house groups. It is also interesting to note that some such groups have false doctrines and concentrate on self, their gifts, talents and abilities.

However, I must state that very many Christians in these movements are honest, sincere and decent people.

Some Elim churches do not advocate the teaching of speaking in tongues and may not uphold the Elim clear doctrine that the evidence that you are saved is that you speak in tongues. This is said to be the Full Gospel. Yet that doctrine is in the Elim Pentecostal Church's official statement of faith as it is in other Pentecostal and charismatic statements of fundamental beliefs. It is a definite and unqualified statement of their beliefs.

This is contrary to Scripture. 1 Corinthians 13 states that tongues will cease when that which is perfect is come, which refers to the completion of Scripture, and the speaking in tongues did cease for centuries until about the early 1900s, and Paul asks the rhetoric question for his time, Do all speak in tongues? Was the tongue speaking from the 1900s real? If one believes the Scriptures the answer is clear.

But I have to state that such frauds exist in other denominations as well as in Pentecostal and charismatic groups and all these frauds hinder Christian witness and the truth of the Gospel.

I have to say that I am a Christian and I have made mistakes, two of which were serious. I do not, therefore, laud it over others. I have repented but I am not in the public eye whereas those I list below are, or were.

There is a crackpot pastor in Florida by the name of Terry Jones who has burned copies of the Koran and supports a new film which insults Mohammed and the Muslim faith. This man is full of hate and is dangerous and his conduct is opposed to Scriptural principles. He is certainly not following the Lord. He is a phoney and a heretic!

Aimee Semple MacPherson was a charismatic who faked her own death, wanted a telephone in her coffin so she could talk to God and to her colleagues. Once she claimed to have been kidnapped and, later, sued her mother's attorney for slander. Eventually, MacPherson died in 1944 from an overdose, apparently accidental. She was a show woman, an actress and, although she had a following, she was in opposition to certain Christian doctrines.

Lonnie Fisher was a Pentecostal claiming to be a true prophet and involved with the Vineyard Movement. He always taught that homosexuality was a sin and yet he was homosexual himself. He eventually died of AIDS.

Marjoe Gortner was a child preacher and performed miracles. His later campaigns received lots of money. He loved both being filmed and the self-promotion he received and he showed how evangelists manipulated their audiences just as spiritualists manipulate audiences today.

Billy James Hargis began well with upholding fundamental Christian doctrine but was involved with many sex scandals with both male and female students.

Neville Johnson was from the Pentecostal Assemblies of God and pastor of the largest Pentecostal church in Australasia. It was shown that he misused his office of trust and indulged in immoral and deceitful conduct.

Jimmy Swaggart was also a Pentecostal and verbally attacked other Pentecostal evangelists such as Jim and Tammy Bakker and Marvin Gorman and exposed their immorality. What he said of these other people was possibly correct but he had no right to be judgemental as he had adulterous affairs himself even with prostitutes.

Another charismatic and faith healer was Peter Popoff who was shown up as a con man and how he had plants in the audience to testify to his 'miracles' of healing, a practice spiritualists use.

Morris Cerullo was an outrageous fraud. He was a charismatic who boasted that he power to heal anyone even those with terminal illnesses. In 1992, he said he had cured a child with cancer and she died two months later of that disease. He was very similar to spiritual mediums like the despicable Betty Shine and he also accumulated wealth from his acts. He falsely claimed that his money was used to evangelise, particularly among his own family, but this was apparently shown to be false.

Mike Warnake was an example of a Pentecostal/charismatic teacher who believed in entertaining his audiences. He was a comedian by trade. There are many Elim, Pentecostal and charismatic groups who major on entertainment-evangelism. He was investigated for tax evasion and serious fraud while professing to be a Christian. He had many sexual affairs and yet preached morality and decency. His claims to have been a Satanist were also called into question.

I wish to repeat that I have made serious mistakes since I became a Christian but have repented, but I am not in the public eye. I am not holier than thou.

Robert Tilton was a fraud. He appealed for prayer requests from those in need but tore them up not being interested in the needs of others. He was fascinated by money and had a television programme Success-N-Life and amassed 80 million US dollars a year. His show was taken off the air as he was shown to be a charlatan.

Jim Williams was a Pentecostal pastor of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand. His moral teaching was doubted when he was found guilty of adultery and he took no steps to put matters right. He was barred from churches and it was shown that over many years he had adulterous affairs with many women.

Douglas Goodman was the pastor of a Victory Church in London. His stand for morality and decency was shown up when he went to prison for three and a half years for sexual assault on four members of his congregation.

Paul Cain was involved with the notorious Kansas City Prophets ([see separate article](#)). He was Pentecostal and, at one time, regarded as a prophetic legend. It was revealed that he was both an alcoholic and a homosexual whereas he had preached against these things.

Another Pentecostal was Paul Hughes from New Zealand. He was a very fine preacher with an emphasis on opposing pre-marital sex, abortion, pornography and gambling. But he was convicted of sexually abusing a teenager in the 1980s.

A friendship with President George W Bush was a feature of Pastor Ted Haggard. He had a liaison with a male prostitute who supplied him with methamphetamines. Haggard confessed to other homosexual relationships.

John Paulk denounced homosexuality as a dreadful sin and published a book to this effect. Yet he was found and photographed in gay bars and admitted to homosexual activity.

Pentecostal historian and preacher Robert Liardon of California admitted a serious moral failure with a homosexual affair with his church's young minister, John Carette.

Another Pentecostal pastor who abused children was Frank Houston of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand.

Paul Barnes was a minister in Colorado who agreed with the Biblical teaching that homosexuality was sinful and yet he had many homosexual activities.

Fraud is the word to describe Kent Hovind an American Baptist, He falsely declared himself to be bankrupt and was convicted of 58 Federal tax offences and went to prison for ten years.

W V Grant was investigated for his faith healing and miracles. His supernatural abilities were shown to be fakes. How many did he deceive? How many have turned their backs on Christianity because of his falsehoods?

Everything must be put in perspective. There are very many people in Elim, Pentecostal and charismatic groups that are faithful in preaching the Gospel and I have been privileged to know many of them. But their teaching is that the evidence of being baptised in the Spirit is that they speak in tongues, the Full Gospel, and that fundamental doctrine is certainly erroneous.

A movement that causes concern is the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship founded by Demos Shakarian (1913-1993). The Full Gospel means that you are not saved unless you speak in tongues which is the second blessing. This is stated in their manifesto.

Shakarian was Pentecostal and involved with the largest group of Pentecostals in the USA and supported by another Pentecostal, Oral Roberts, who shared his views. Shakarian believed that he performed countless miracles and healings even on his cattle. He was once indicted for fraud and some of his followers claimed that they died, went to heaven and came back with God's precise instructions to preach charismatic teaching and the Full Gospel.

This is diametrically opposed to Scripture. We are called upon to preach Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1.22ff.)

Demos Shakarian was accused by officials in his own organisation of illegally diverting ministry funds to pay his own bills. He was ordered to repay 168,119 dollars. He was guilty of fraud or attempted fraud. What would have happened if he had not been found out?

One event concerned a Dr Richard Eby who, in 1972, fell to his death and died. He was certainly dead and claimed that he went to Heaven and had an immortal body. Jesus sent him back to earth to preach charismatic doctrine although it conflicts with what the Bible states quite clearly.

In Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 16 from verse 17, we are told to avoid those that cause division and who teach things contrary to true doctrine which some Elim, Assemblies of God , Pentecostal and charismatics teach. To avoid such people is not to be out of rudeness but a polite non-involvement and we are to pray for them to pursue all truth as instructed in the New Testament. Surely, a true Christian will uphold true doctrine. The failure to do so is an insult to God Himself.

There is another consideration. The Bible teaches that all manner of sin can be forgiven except the denial of Christ as Divine and the non-acceptance of Him as Saviour. Adultery and homosexuality can be forgiven as can alcohol and other dependencies, but there needs to be repentance and a new direction away from those sins.

Someone has said that God wants to repair broken people and broken lives because of His love and mercy towards us.

But, sadly, with the examples given , and there are many more, these only serve to give Christianity a bad name and cause many to believe that all Christians are of the same evil mould. But in every organisation and group of people, there may be crooks.

I do not condemn. Who am I to do this since I have failed and let the Lord down myself and have not been a paragon of virtue?

I do not judge these people but I do judge what they do which contravenes Scripture.

Nonetheless, the Scripture warns us of these problems and tells us to avoid them. Doesn't the Christian obey the Word of God?

If you go astray from the Bible you will go astray in your daily life!

Since writing this article, some of the information contained herein has found its way on to Wikipedia and, in July 2012, Wikipedia named one character accused of sexual abuse on a child and that character is not guilty and his inclusion among the list of Christian frauds is untrue and unforgivable.

(2211)