

Feature Article: JAW755-2

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE FAITH MOVEMENT? (PART TWO): THE TEACHINGS OF KENNETH COPELAND

by Hank Hanegraaff and Erwin M. de Castro

This article first appeared in the *Christian Research Journal*, volume 15, number 4 (1993). For further information or to subscribe to the *Christian Research Journal* go to: <http://www.equip.org>

SYNOPSIS

Kenneth Copeland stands today as one of the Faith movement's leading spokesmen. His voluminous material (in print and broadcast media), combined with his crusades and international outreach centers, attest to his vast influence.

Copeland is responsible for spreading many of the Faith movement's unbiblical teachings. He distorts the biblical concepts of faith and covenant. He reduces God to the image of man while elevating man to the status of God. He lowers Jesus to being a product of positive confession who took on a satanic nature at the cross. And he promotes the occult practice of creative visualization.

Copeland's errors are largely due to his negative stance on reasoning, his poor handling of the Bible, his aversion toward theology, and his bias against tradition.

On the night of November 2, 1962, a young man twenty-five years of age, struggling against "sin, sickness, and strife," asked Jesus to "come into [his] heart."¹ His decision came two weeks after his wife had done likewise.² Today, these two individuals head a ministry that literally stretches around the globe, while remaining in the forefront of what has come to be known as the "Faith" movement. They are Kenneth and Gloria Copeland.

Part One of this series explored the roots of the Faith movement and surveyed some of its leading proponents today. In this installment, our primary attention will be devoted to cataloging and critiquing the core theology of one of the most widely recognized and respected Faith teachers to date — Kenneth Copeland.³

FROM OBSCURITY TO CENTER STAGE

Though best known for his "prosperity" message, Copeland began his ascent to Faith stardom from a state of financial disarray. Beset by monetary problems, in 1967 he decided to resume his education at Oral Roberts University (ORU), where he subsequently "landed a job as copilot on Oral Robert's [sic] cross-country crusade flights."⁴

It was not until August of 1967, however, that Copeland experienced a revolution in his outlook through the preaching of yet another evangelist — Kenneth E. Hagin, regarded by many to be the "father of the Faith movement." With reference to his "distant mentor," Copeland has been quoted "as saying that he 'learned nothing' during six months at Oral Roberts University but was so excited by Hagin's teachings that...[he] spent the next month in his garage listening to them."⁵

The Copelands returned to Fort Worth, Texas in 1968 where they established an evangelistic association. Within a few short years their home-based Bible studies reportedly grew into large revivals, sometimes with crowds large enough to fill entire "civic centers and international arenas."⁶

In 1973 the ministry began publishing its own newsletter, *Believer's Voice of Victory*. Two years later, Copeland claimed the Lord "commanded him to 'preach the uncompromised Word on every available voice.'"⁷ This prompted him to launch the *Believer's Voice of Victory* radio broadcast in 1976. By 1979 Copeland's ministry was established firmly enough to enter the arena of television, paving the way for its 1981 venture into satellite communications. And in August of the following year "the ministry made history by initiating the first *global* religious broadcast" (emphasis in original).⁸

Copeland continues to experience popular acceptance within various charismatic and Pentecostal circles. His books, booklets, and taped messages can be found in a number of Christian bookstores, and his crusades and revivals consistently produce large turnouts. Furthermore, the ministry's international scope and influence is well attested by its offices in England, the Philippines, South Africa, Australia, Canada, and Hong Kong.

While not every Faith teacher holds to all of Copeland's doctrines, they, along with his followers, consider him a leading — if not *the* leading — authority on Faith theology. "Many have already coronated Copeland as the new king of the Faith movement," writes one observer. "In a recent article, even *Time* magazine refers to Copeland as the 'chief exponent' of the Faith movement."⁹

THE FORCE OF FAITH

Of the multiple views of faith held by Faith teachers,¹⁰ Copeland focuses primarily on an understanding of faith as a force. "Faith is a power force," he claims. "It is a tangible force. It is a conductive force."¹¹ Moreover, "faith is a spiritual force...It is substance. Faith has the ability to effect natural substance."¹² As "the force of gravity...makes the law of gravity work...this force of faith...makes the laws of the spirit world function."¹³

Copeland affirms that "God cannot do anything for you apart or separate from faith,"¹⁴ for "*faith is God's source of power*" (emphasis in original).¹⁵ Moreover, "everything that you're able to see or touch, anything that you can feel, anything that's perceptive to the five physical senses, was originally the faith of God, and was born in the substance of God's faith."¹⁶ In other words, "faith was the raw material substance that the Spirit of God used to form the universe."¹⁷

Copeland adds that "God used words when He created the heaven and the earth....Each time God spoke, He released His faith — the creative power to bring His words to pass."¹⁸ For "words are spiritual containers,"¹⁹ and the "force of faith is released by words."²⁰

Copeland derives his definition of faith from Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (KJV). He interprets the word "substance" as some transcendent, primary element that makes up the universe; it was and is activated by spoken words at the onset of creation (both God's original creation of the world and all subsequent creations, whether by God or man).

Contrary to Copeland's view, the word translated "substance" in the King James Version is the Greek word *hypostasis* which, in the context of Hebrews 11:1, means "an assured impression, a mental realizing."²¹ Far from being some tangible material or energetic force, faith is *a channel of living trust* stretching from man to God. It is an *assurance* that God's promises never fail, even if sometimes we do not experience their fulfillment during our mortal existence. Other translations render *hypostasis* more precisely as "being sure" (NIV), "to be sure" (TEV), and "assurance" (NASB).

Neither the original Greek text nor any of the modern translations support Copeland's understanding of faith. The same holds true for his understanding of spoken words. Besides, the idea of words functioning as faith-filled containers makes no sense if there is no such thing as a "force of faith" (requiring packaging and transportation) in the first place.

A GOD OF HUMAN PROPORTIONS

Copeland's view of God fares no better biblically than his understanding of faith. He describes God as someone "very much like you and me....A being that stands somewhere around 6'2," 6'3," that weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of a couple of hundred pounds, little better, [and] has a [hand]span nine inches across."²²

Copeland's statement is based on his *hyperliteral* reading of Isaiah 40:12 ("Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, marked off the heavens with a [nine inch] span,..." [AV]). Yet following the same line of interpretation, one would also have to conclude that God literally held a basket full of dust and weighed mountains on a gigantic set of scales (v. 12b) — an absurd proposition ruled out by the context of the passage. The fact is that Isaiah 40 makes extensive use of figurative language to underscore the vast difference between the Creator and His creation.

Giving a literal spin on verses that figuratively describe God in humanlike (anthropomorphic) terms, Copeland makes God out to be a "spirit-being with a body, complete with eyes, and eyelids, ears, nostrils, a mouth, hands and fingers, and feet."²³ However, the Bible never intended to convey the notion that God has physical features like His human creation. Anthropomorphic descriptions were simply meant to help us understand and relate to our Maker. Jesus declared, "God is spirit" (John 4:24), not a spirit-being with a body (cf. Deut. 4:12). The Creator is, after all, "God, and not man" (Hos. 11:9).

The idea of God possessing a body (physical or spirit) implies the unbiblical view that the Trinity is actually composed of three separate beings. Moreover, a God who has a body with definite, measurable dimensions cannot truly be omnipresent, unlike the God of Scripture who is present everywhere in all His fullness (Jer. 23:23-24). (It is true that in His human nature Christ has a body and is localized in space and time. But in His divine nature He remains nonphysical and omnipresent, sharing this immutable nature with the Father and Holy Spirit.) Copeland's deflation of God is best exemplified by his comment that "the biggest failure in the Bible...is God."²⁴ In stark contrast, the biblical God is an all-powerful being (Dan. 4:35) whose plans cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2) and who considers nothing too difficult (Jer. 32:17; Luke 1:37).

Copeland's diminished view of God is further amplified by a correspondingly inflated view of the universe in general and man in particular. He claims that the earth is "a copy of the mother planet [i.e., heaven] where God lives."²⁵ Exactly how Copeland could "squeeze" God on any planet is difficult to fathom, especially since Solomon pointed out that heaven itself cannot contain God (1 Kings 8:27).

MEMBERS OF GOD'S CLASS

Copeland overemphasizes similarities between God and man to the point where any distinction becomes virtually nil: "God's reason for creating Adam was His desire to *reproduce* Himself....Adam is as much like God as you could get, *just the same as Jesus....Adam, in the Garden of Eden, was God manifested in the flesh*" (emphasis added).²⁶

Referring to his so-called *law of genesis*, Copeland asserts, "Adam was created in God's own image and likeness, a spirit-being...[and] takes on the nature of his spiritual father or lord."²⁷ In explaining the terms "image" and "likeness" in Genesis 1:26, he adds: "If you stood Adam upside God, they look just exactly alike....If you stood Jesus and Adam side-by-side, they would look and act and sound exactly alike....The image is that they look just alike, but the likeness is that they act alike and they are alike....All of God's attributes, all of God's authority, all of God's faith, all of God's ability was invested in that man."²⁸

Actually, the terms "image" and "likeness" refute Copeland's point. The Hebrew word for "likeness" (*demuth*) simply means similarity or resemblance, not identity.²⁹ Furthermore, the term itself actually "defines and limits" the word "image" (Hebrew: *tselem*) in order "to avoid the implication that man is a precise copy of God, albeit miniature" (emphasis added).³⁰

Humans are created in God's image in the sense that they share, in a finite and imperfect way, God's *communicable attributes* (e.g., rationality and morality). These attributes, in turn, give individuals the capacity to enjoy fellowship with God, develop personal relationships with one another, and take care of

God's creation as He has commanded.³¹ God's *incommunicable attributes* (e.g., omnipotence, omniscience, self-sufficiency), however, remain solely His.

Along with the "image of God," Copeland also refers to "the life of God," which he interchanges with the terms "the absolute life of God," "absolute life," "life force," "life in the absolute sense," "eternal life," and "everlasting life."³² He applies these terms to a quality of life, the source of which is God.³³ But he also speaks of it as "the substance — the source, the power — the unseen force that makes God, God...[and] places Him above everything else that exists."³⁴

Copeland states that "man was created to know that great *life force* and he longs for it in his dreams. Adam had that *life force* in him before he committed high treason" (emphases added).³⁵ This is yet another sense in which Copeland believes Adam to be created in God's class. He was made to partake of "the unseen force that makes God, God" — once again diminishing severely if not altogether destroying any final distinction between creator and creature.

Furthermore, this "force" is at times spoken of as a reality more ultimate than God Himself, conferring deity not only on the Creator but on His creation, man. This again puts God and redeemed man in the same class.

In Copeland's theology, Adam (and, consequently, the rest of humanity) does not appear to have a uniquely human nature. Initially possessing the nature of God, "when Adam committed high treason [sinned] against God and bowed his knee to Satan, spiritual death — the nature of Satan — was lodged in his heart."³⁶ Adam had, in effect, allegedly traded in his divine nature for a satanic nature, otherwise called "spiritual death." However, Scripture reveals that mankind is wholly distinct from both God (2 Sam. 7:22; cf. Mark 12:32) and angelic/demonic beings (Ps. 8:5; cf. Heb. 2:7). And even after the Fall, man is still said to bear the image of God (1 Cor. 11:7).

Copeland also claims that Adam's transgression empowered Satan to evict God from the earth. "God's on the outside looking in," says Copeland. "He doesn't have any legal entree into the earth. The thing don't belong to Him."³⁷ (Psalm 24:1 says otherwise.) And supposedly, since "the sin of Adam went all the way up to, but not including, the throne of God...[even] the Heavenly Holy of Holies had to be purified."³⁸

COVENANT OF CONVENIENCE

According to Copeland, "God had no avenue of lasting faith or moving in the earth. He had to have covenant with somebody....He had to be invited in, in other words, or He couldn't come."³⁹ In fact, "the reason that He's making covenant is to get into the earth."⁴⁰ "God is on the outside looking in," says Copeland. "In order to have any say-so in the earth, He's gonna have to be in agreement with a man here."⁴¹

"Since man was the key figure in the Fall," Copeland argues, "man had to be the key figure in the redemption, so God approached a man named Abram."⁴² An agreement was struck between God and Abram that "gave God access to the earth."⁴³ God, in turn, "promised to care for Abraham and his descendants in every way — spiritually, physically, financially, socially."⁴⁴ Commenting on the deal, Copeland writes that God "re-enacted with Abram what Satan had done with Adam, except that God did not sneak in and use deception...and Abram bought it."⁴⁵

As his comments indicate, Copeland views *divine covenants* no differently from *business contracts*.⁴⁶ They are benefit-oriented, not relationship-oriented. They are formed by mutual agreement (for mutual benefit) through negotiation, as opposed to being initiated by the stronger party offering non-negotiable help (not of necessity but of grace) — which is the traditional Christian understanding of God's covenants. They focus on the fulfillment of certain terms (performance) rather than personal loyalty. Copeland himself states that "the Word of the living God is a contract."⁴⁷

Copeland's view deflates the biblical concept of God in numerous other ways. He parallels God's actions with those of Satan. In effect he makes man to be the dominant party over God — even claiming that Abraham could have told God to "bug off" when God offered him a "proposition."⁴⁸ And he seemingly attributes the ultimate sacredness of divine covenants not to the figure who stands behind them (viz.

God), but to the fact that they are composed of words: "Words are the most sacred things....This is a word planet...governed by words...created by words....Words cause it to function...cause life...cause death....Words go on forever....Words are holy."⁴⁹

Copeland maintains that God "used His right that Abraham had given Him"⁵⁰ to provide a way for Jesus to enter the earth. Abraham gave God what He needed: "the chance to use his [Abraham's] mouth, because what God was after was a vehicle in the earth that was a man to get His Word in there."⁵¹

THE SPOKEN WORD MADE FLESH

"God is injecting His Word into the earth to produce this Jesus," Copeland explains. "This [*sic*] faith-filled words that framed the image that's in Him....He had to sneak it in here around the god of this world [Satan]."⁵² Using a combination of faith and confession, "God spoke His Word and then spoke His Word again....He kept saying, 'He is coming. He is coming.'"⁵³ However, "the only avenue God had to get His words into the earth was through men... [t]hrough the mouths of His prophets....Finally, the great moment came when that Word was brought forth in human form."⁵⁴

During this final phase, "the angels spoke the words of the covenant to her [Mary], and the Spirit of God hovered over her and generated that seed, which was the Word that the angel spoke to her. And there was conceived in her, the Bible says, a holy thing. The Word literally became flesh."⁵⁵

The notion of Jesus being the end product of generations of positive confession is categorically unbiblical. It suggests that the Word of John chapter one was a creation (the personalization of the previously impersonal words of God) rather than the eternally existent Creator (see vv.1-3), thus subverting the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Copeland also gave a "prophecy" in which Jesus allegedly said, "They crucified Me for claiming that I was God. But I didn't claim I was God; I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me."⁵⁶ Copeland asserts Jesus did not openly claim to be God because "He hadn't come to earth as God, He'd come as man. He'd set aside His divine power."⁵⁷ Citing Philippians 2:5-7, he states that the incarnate Christ "had no innate supernatural powers. He had no ability to perform miracles until after He was anointed by the Holy Spirit."⁵⁸

The passage Copeland cites (v. 6), however, describes Christ as "*being* in very nature God." The participle "*being*" is rendered in the present active tense (Greek: *huparchon*), denoting Christ's *ongoing condition* as having the nature of God. Christ did not give up His divine attributes during His incarnation (cf. Col. 2:9; Heb. 13:8), but instead added to them (*see* Phil. 2:7, "taking") a full human nature in the form of a servant. Moreover, Jesus referred to Himself as the Son of Man (Mark 2:5-10; cf. Dan. 7:13-14) and the unique Son of God the Father (John 5:18; 10:30-33), demonstrating His claim to be God.⁵⁹

In Copeland's view, three basic factors enabled Jesus to perform miracles. First, "the force of faith was controlling His ministry."⁶⁰ Second, "He exercised that authority by the use of words."⁶¹ Third, "He used the Covenant to control the laws of nature."⁶² Copeland's view, however, rests upon a false understanding of faith, the spoken word, and the Abrahamic covenant, and is therefore erroneous.

SPIRITUAL DEATH AND REBIRTH IN HELL

When it comes to defining the Atonement, Copeland says, "It wasn't a physical death on the cross that paid the price for sin...anybody can do that."⁶³ Jesus supposedly "put Himself into the hands of Satan when He went to that cross, and took that same nature that Adam did [when he sinned]."⁶⁴ Copeland is here referring to the nature of Satan, as God pronounced that "Adam would die spiritually — that he would take on the nature of Satan which is spiritual death."⁶⁵ He adds that "the day that Jesus was crucified, God's life, that eternal energy that was His from birth, moved out of Him and He accepted the very nature of death itself."⁶⁶

During an alleged conversation with Copeland, Jesus is said to have remarked, "It was a sign of Satan that was hanging on the cross....I accepted, in my own spirit, spiritual death; and the light was turned off."⁶⁷ We are told that Jesus "had to give up His righteousness"⁶⁸ and "accepted the sin nature of Satan."⁶⁹

Contrary to the teaching that Christ underwent a change of nature (into a satanic being), the Bible depicts Jesus as having an immutable divine nature (Heb. 13:8; cf. Mal. 3:6). Moreover, in saying that "spiritual death means separation from the life of God,"⁷⁰ Copeland tacitly admits that Jesus completely lost His deity. For, as we noted earlier, Copeland defines the "life of God" as "the unseen force that makes God, God." However, Scripture declares that God is eternal and unchanging and thus never ceases to be God. The Father says of Christ, "But you remain the same, and your years will never end" (Heb. 1:12).

Finally, the notion of Jesus being overtaken by "the very nature of death" is contradicted by Jesus' claim that He has "*life* in Himself" (John 5:26; cf. 1:4), is "the resurrection and the *life*" (11:25), and is "the way, the truth, and the *life*" (14:6). The "spiritual death of Christ" teaching entails an implicit denial of Christ's deity and, in turn, of the Trinity.

Still, Copeland insists "Satan *conquered* Jesus on the Cross and took His spirit to the dark regions of hell" (emphasis in original).⁷¹ Copeland's description of Christ's ordeal in hell is nothing short of chilling: "He [Jesus] allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell....He allowed Himself to come under Satan's control...every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him....They tortured Him beyond anything anybody had ever conceived. For three days He suffered everything there is to suffer."⁷²

The situation seemed hopeless, as Jesus' "emaciated, poured out, little, wormy spirit is down in the bottom of that thing; and the devil thinks he's got Him destroyed."⁷³ However, Copeland explains that "Satan fell into the trap. He took Him [Jesus] into hell illegally. He carried Him in there [when] He did not sin."⁷⁴ God found the opening He needed: "That Word of the living God went down into that pit of destruction and charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life....Jesus was born again — the firstborn from the dead the Word calls Him — and He whipped the devil in his own backyard."⁷⁵

Copeland's account, vivid though it may be, is not in the Bible. It misuses the phrase "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18) to bolster the "born again Jesus" doctrine. Actually, the term "firstborn" (Greek: *prototokos*) primarily denotes primacy, headship, and preeminence. And the phrase itself points to Christ's supremacy "over all creation" (v. 15) in general and those who will be raised from the dead in particular (alluding to Christ's bodily resurrection — not some spiritual resuscitation in hell).

Moreover, Jesus was not dragged into hell by Satan, but instead committed His spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46) and went directly to paradise (v. 43). Nor was He tortured by a host of demons; He triumphed "over them by the *cross*" (Col. 2:15). Jesus paid for humanity's sin in full (Greek: *tetelestai*) at the cross (John 19:30) — not by becoming a satanic being, but through His *physical* sacrifice (Heb. 10:10; Col. 1:22).

THE BELIEVER'S AUTHORITY

Copeland's basis for the believer's authority can be viewed in three distinct stages. First, upon conversion the believer undergoes a total and immediate change of nature. At the moment of spiritual birth "the spirit of God hovered over you, and there was conceived in your body a holy thing *identical to Jesus*....And there was imparted into you *zoe, the life of God*" (emphases added).⁷⁶ Hence, "you are to think the way Jesus thought. He didn't think it robbery to be equal with God."⁷⁷ Copeland's remarks, "You are not a spiritual schizophrenic — half-God and half-Satan — you are all-God"⁷⁸ and "You don't have a God in you; you are one,"⁷⁹ demonstrate that being born again means nothing less to him than becoming a god.

Yet Scripture states there is only one God who indwells all believers (John 14:17, 23). Additionally, the Bible views spiritual birth *not* in terms of a change of nature (from satanic to divine), but as the regeneration of a uniquely human spirit by God (2 Cor. 5:17; Tit. 3:5).

In the second stage of his discourse, Copeland teaches that the believer's change of nature (into a god) brings with it a proportional change in ability. "Every man that has been born again has had this faith [viz. God's] put inside him," he writes. "This faith is good enough to make all things possible to the believer."⁸⁰

Copeland comments, "As a born-again believer, you are equipped with the Word. You have the power of God at your disposal. By getting the Word deep into your spirit and speaking it boldly out your mouth, you release spiritual power to change things in the natural circumstances."⁸¹

The believer is thus allegedly able to speak things into existence by way of faith-filled words, or *positive confession*. But as we have already shown, Copeland's views of faith and words are without legitimate scriptural warrant, and are therefore invalid when applied to the believer.

In the third stage of Copeland's teaching on the believer's authority, we are told that knowing and exercising the rights set forth under the covenant guarantee success in confession. He remarks that the Bible "is the wisdom of God placed in covenant contract....Everything in it is mine....You just keep looking at it, and keep reading it, and that covenant will turn you into that kind of person — whatever it is you decide to be."⁸²

Copeland translates his concept of covenant rights into what has been termed the "health and wealth" or "prosperity" message. "The basic principle of the Christian life is to know that God put our sin, sickness, disease, sorrow, grief, and poverty on Jesus at Calvary," he asserts. "For Him to put any of this on us now would be a miscarriage of justice."⁸³

PRESCRIBING VISUALIZATION

Copeland combines his "legal" precedent for prosperity with his "mechanics" of confession to form a formula for speaking things into existence. He insists, "You have the same creative faith and ability on the inside of you that God used when he created the heavens and the earth."⁸⁴ However, he adds that most believers are not able to make full use of their inner power because "our imagination...has been so fouled up and fathered up with wasted useless words [and] wasted useless images."⁸⁵

As a corrective, Copeland instructs believers to "go to the New Testament, get the words of the covenant that cover the situation that you hope to bring to pass. Build the image of that hope inside of you....Keep the word before your eyes."⁸⁶ As examples, he uses an inner picture of an 82-foot yacht that will transform into reality in the Holy of Holies in heaven, along with a "picture [of a Bible] that came right out of me and went into the Holy of Holies,"⁸⁷ where it developed into an actual, physical object.

Copeland also claims that "when you get to the place where you take the Word of God and build an image on the inside of you of not having crippled legs and not having blind eyes, but when you close your eyes you just see yourself just leap out of that wheelchair, it will picture that in the Holy of Holies and you will come out of there."⁸⁸

Recognizing that his technique "sounds like that visualization they do in meditation and metaphysical practices,"⁸⁹ Copeland counters by reversing the tables. "What they're doing sounds like this," he retorts. "The devil is a counterfeiter. He never came up with anything real. That is the perverted form of the real thing. Where do you think he got it? That sucker doesn't know anything on his own. Amen."⁹⁰

During another occasion, however, Copeland revealingly affirms that both positive confession and creative visualization are based on the same principle: "Words create pictures, and pictures in your mind create words. And then the words come back out your mouth....And when that spiritual force comes out it is going to give substance to the image that's on the inside of you. Aw, that's that visualization stuff! Aw, that's that New Age! No, New Age is trying to do this; and they'd get somewhat results out of it because this is spiritual law, brother."⁹¹

Copeland says, "Any image that you get down on the inside of you that is so vivid when you close your eyes you see it, it'll come to pass. When God came at the Tower of Babel, He said, 'Anything they can imagine, they can do.'"⁹² He fails to note, however, that those individuals built the tower out of brick and tar (Gen. 11:3), not simply out of their imagination. Moreover, their venture incurred God's judgment (vv. 6-9). Copeland can argue and fuss all he wants, but the fact of the matter is that through such teachings he has entered the world of the occult.

FATALLY FLAWED

Virtually every error we have noted in Copeland's theology can be attributed to the following four reasons.

First, Copeland seems vehemently opposed to sound reasoning. "Believers are not to be led by logic," he writes. "We are not even to be led by *good sense*" (emphasis in original).⁹³ Copeland's statement is apparently based on his mistaken belief that the "ministry of Jesus was never governed by logic or reason....He was not led by logic. He was not led by the mind."⁹⁴ Isaiah 1:18, on the other hand, quotes God as saying, "Come now, let us *reason* together."

Second, Copeland fails to observe some basic principles of biblical interpretation (including fundamental rules of grammar and usage), at times relying instead on so-called revelation knowledge (information allegedly derived from direct, one-on-one communication with God). His neglect in this area is made embarrassingly apparent by his gross misunderstanding of key words (e.g., faith) and utter disregard of the context in which they appear. The Bible, however, stresses the importance of correctly handling the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

Third, Copeland does not seem to acknowledge the importance of systematic theology, as indicated by his statement, "I don't preach doctrine, I preach faith."⁹⁵ Although he may not realize it, *his preaching on faith and other topics do in fact constitute doctrines*, which combined form his theology (however inconsistent). He would do well to heed the apostle Paul's advice to "watch your life and your doctrine closely" (1 Tim. 4:16).

Fourth, Copeland displays an open attitude of disdain and disrespect for the historically established views of the church. Admittedly, tradition must ultimately be tested by the Word of God. However, it should be recognized that certain historically accepted views, especially as they apply to essential Christian doctrine (e.g., the nature of faith, the nature of God, the nature of man, and the person and work of Jesus Christ), are significant, time-tested summations of fundamental Bible-based truths. To deviate from them is to reject the heart of Christian faith.

It is regrettable that someone so influential within contemporary Christianity continues to preach a message that overturns virtually every major biblical teaching. To date, Copeland refuses to discuss with his critics the issues raised in this article. We only hope that he will soon realize the dangerous road he is traveling. As Scripture warns, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1). For now, Copeland, being a false teacher, has made himself an enemy of the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

NOTES

1. Kenneth Copeland, "The Word in My life...," *Kenneth Copeland Ministries Catalog* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, n.d.), 3.
2. Kenneth Copeland, *The Music of Ministry* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1991, audiotope #53-0018), side 1.
3. Due to space limitations, this article will confine its focus on areas of Copeland's teachings that form the framework for positive confession, which in turn provide the mechanism for the "health and wealth" gospel. Attempts to contact Copeland to resolve any possible misunderstanding of his teachings have been unsuccessful. Still, every effort has been made to present and evaluate Copeland's views as accurately and fairly as possible.
4. *Living to Give* (pamphlet) (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, n.d.), 4.
5. Charles Farah, "A Critical Analysis: The 'Roots and Fruits' of Faith-Formula Theology," *PNEUMA: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, Spring 1981, 15; cited in Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 183.
6. *Living to Give*, 4.
7. *Ibid.*, 5.
8. *Ibid.*, 8.
9. D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988), 95. Benny Hinn, Jerry Savelle, and Charles Capps number among those Faith teachers who have been profoundly impacted by Copeland.
10. *Ibid.*, 135-42.
11. Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Faith* (Fort Worth: KCP Publications, 1989), 10.
12. *Forces of the Recreated Human Spirit* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1982), 8.
13. Kenneth Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1974), 18-19.
14. Kenneth Copeland, *Freedom from Fear* (Fort Worth: KCP Publications, 1983), 11.
15. *Ibid.*, 12.
16. Kenneth Copeland, *Spirit, Soul and Body I* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1985, audiotope #01-0601), side 1.
17. Kenneth Copeland, *Authority of the Believer II* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1987, audiotope #01-0302), side 1.
18. Kenneth Copeland, *The Power of the Tongue* (Fort Worth: KCP Publications, 1980), 4.

19. *Forces of the Recreated Human Spirit*, 15; cf. 14.
20. *Ibid.*, 17.
21. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 419.
22. Copeland, *Spirit, Soul and Body I*, side 1.
23. Kenneth Copeland ministry letter, 21 July 1977.
24. Kenneth Copeland, *Praise-a-Thon*, TBN, 1988. Copeland has, in another instance, stated that God "is not a failure" (Kenneth Copeland, *The Troublemaker* [Fort Worth, TX: Kenneth Copeland Publications, n.d.], 23).
25. Kenneth Copeland, *Following the Faith of Abraham I* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1989, audiotape #01-3001), side 1.
26. Copeland, *Following the Faith of Abraham I*, side 1.
27. Kenneth Copeland, *Our Covenant with God* (Fort Worth: KCP Publications, 1987), 7-8.
28. Kenneth Copeland, *Authority of the Believer IV* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1987, audiotape #01-0304), side 1.
29. Cf. James M. Kinnebrew, *The Charismatic Doctrine of Positive Confession: A Historical, Exegetical, and Theological Critique* (doctoral dissertation, Mid-America Baptist Seminary, 1988), 157.
30. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 1:192.
31. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 510; cf. 514.
32. Copeland, *Walking in the Realm of the Miraculous*, 74-76. Copeland's understanding of these terms, derived from the Greek word *zoe* (life), is similar to that of ancient Gnostics. See Rudolf Bultmann, "Zoe in Greek Usage," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (abridged in one volume), ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co./Paternoster Press, 1985), 291.
33. *Ibid.*, 74.
34. *Ibid.*, 76.
35. *Ibid.*, 74.
36. Copeland, *Our Covenant with God*, 9.
37. Kenneth Copeland, *The Image of God in You III* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1989, audiotape #01-1403), side 1.
38. Kenneth Copeland, *Inner Image of the Covenant* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1985, audiotape #01-4406), side 1.
39. Kenneth Copeland, *God's Covenant with Man II* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1985, audiotape #01-4404), side 1.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*
42. Copeland, *Our Covenant with God*, 10.
43. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
44. *Ibid.*, 15.
45. *Ibid.*, 10.
46. See Elmer A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), 72-73. Cf. William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979); and George Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, September 1954, 50-76.
47. Kenneth Copeland, "The Abrahamic Covenant" (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1985, audiotape #01-4405), side 1.
48. Copeland, *God's Covenants with Man II*, side 2.
49. Copeland, *The Abrahamic Covenant*, side 1.
50. Kenneth Copeland, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1990, audiotape #02-0017), side 1.
51. Copeland, *The Image of God in You III*, side 1.
52. *Ibid.*, side 2.
53. Copeland, *The Power of the Tongue*, 9-10.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Copeland, *The Abrahamic Covenant*, side 2.
56. Kenneth Copeland, "Take Time to Pray," *Believer's Voice of Victory*, February 1987, 9.
57. Kenneth Copeland, "Question & Answer," *Believer's Voice of Victory*, August 1988, 8.
58. *Ibid.*
59. On Jesus' self-witness, see Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1990), 44-126.
60. Copeland, *The Force of Faith*, 9.
61. Copeland, *The Power of the Tongue*, 15.
62. Copeland, *Our Covenant with God*, 21.
63. Kenneth Copeland, *What Satan Saw on the Day of Pentecost* (Fort Worth: Messages by Kenneth Copeland, n.d., audiotape #BCC-19), side 1.
64. Kenneth Copeland, *The Incarnation* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1985, audiotape #01-0402), side 1.
65. Copeland, *Our Covenant with God*, 9.
66. Kenneth Copeland, "The Price of It All," *Believer's Voice of Victory*, September 1991, 3.
67. Copeland, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne*, side 2.
68. Copeland, *The Incarnation*, side 2.
69. Copeland, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne*, side 2.
70. Copeland, *Inner Image of the Covenant*, side 1.
71. Kenneth Copeland, *Holy Bible: Kenneth Copeland Reference Edition* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1991), 129.
72. Copeland, "The Price of It All," 3.

73. Kenneth Copeland, *Believer's Voice of Victory* (television program), TBN, 21 April 1991.
74. Copeland, *What Happened from the Cross to the Throne*, side 2.
75. Copeland, "The Price of It All," 4-6.
76. Copeland, *The Abrahamic Covenant*, side 2.
77. Kenneth Copeland, *Now We Are in Christ Jesus* (Fort Worth: KCP Publications, 1980), 23-24.
78. *Ibid.*, 16-17.
79. Kenneth Copeland, *The Force of Love* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Ministries, 1987, audiotape #02-0028), side 1.
80. Copeland, *The Force of Faith*, 13.
81. Copeland, *The Power of the Tongue*, 15.
82. Copeland, *The Abrahamic Covenant*, side 1.
83. Copeland, *The Troublemaker*, 6.
84. Copeland, *Inner Image of the Covenant*, side 2.
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*
91. Kenneth Copeland, *Believer's Voice of Victory* (television program), TBN, 28 March 1991.
92. Copeland, *Inner Image of the Covenant*, side 2.
93. Copeland, *The Force of Faith*, 7.
94. *Ibid.*, 7-8.
95. Copeland, *Following the Faith of Abraham I*, side 2.