



**"He that is least (with a John the Baptist ministry)
is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11)**

The Old Ship of Zion

Ministry of Cpt. Gordon Nelson

Water baptism is accepting God's salvation.

"He that believeth and is baptized" (Mk. 16:16)

"Save yourselves" (Acts 2:40)

MESSAGE 22 - 2006

MAKE US A KING TO JUDGE US!

By Cpt. Gordon Nelson

"Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold thou art old...NOW MAKE US A KING!" (1 Sam. 8:4-5)

Samuel had already appointed his own sons, Joel and Abiah, as judges in Beersheba. *"And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment"* (1 Sam. 8:3), just as politicians in Washington D.C. are doing today. *"The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."* (Ecc. 1:9)

My own son had as his goal in life to be another lawyer supporting the same ideology of the ACLU's view on Christianity. He can't understand, with such goals, why I wouldn't give him a thin dime toward his education. In Berkeley, Calif., I saw students lined up for blocks on the first of the month to receive checks to finance their rebellion of the 1960's. If you chose to board a train whose destination is hell, you pay for your own ticket! Sorry! *"And Samuel prayed to the LORD"* about their request for a king, for *"the thing displeased Samuel."* (1 Sam. 8:6)

God ruled Israel through thirteen judges

God had ruled Israel through thirteen judges He had chosen to be judge over Israel since the death of Joshua. The day one of these judges died, Israel would go into apostasy and whoring after strange gods. Their enemies would then prey and plunder them. Israel was driven to its knees and cried out to God. God would show His mercy by raising up another deliverer. This scene became like a broken record throughout the period of the rule of the judges over Israel, constantly repeating itself.

The type of judge that God would choose was a matter of scorn to the intellectuals of that hour. On the whole, these judges were just plain folk like you and I, from relatively poor families. These judges would literally save Israel, *"not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."* (Zech. 4:6) It is here that one literally sees plainly how God worked through the judges, *"His wonders to perform."* *"And when the LORD raised them up judges, THEN the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge."* (Jdg. 2:18)

All of the thirteen judges God miraculously raised up were from the poor of the least of the tribes of Israel. It is the exact opposite of the world, where they look to the very rich for their salvation. We live in a caste system in American where the very rich rule by their "means." *"The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so."* (Jer. 5:31) *"The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."* (Prov. 22:7)

Karl Marx vindicates the existence of a class struggle, but the poor all believe they should be ruled by the rich, *“and my people love to have it so: and WHAT WILL YE DO IN THE END thereof?”* the prophet asks. (Jer. 5:31) *“The poor is hated even of his own neighbor: but the rich hath many friends.”* (Prov. 14:20)

Solomon exhorts, “The poor man’s wisdom is despised”

Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, in reminiscing over his long life, observed, *“This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me.”* (Ecc. 9:13)

“There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.” (Ecc. 9:14-17)

God’s wisdom: *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise...That no flesh should glory in his presence.”* (1 Cor. 1:27,29)

The Kingfish is a king in his own kingdom

To behold the Kingfish strutting in his cowboy apparel appearing on stage, while taking up an offering, spinning out his Tennessee football yarns, is an image that is imprinted into my mind. The Tom-Cat Patten would tell us how, after his football games, it cost him and his player buddies \$50 to get a girl. It would always bring laughter from the crowd, and then he would add, “But now I can have any one of these choir girls for \$5!” This caused even more laughter!

Next, we’d hear the numbers. “God said there was three people to give \$10,000 each, ten folks to give \$5,000, twenty-five to give \$1,000, and 50 people to give \$100. Of course, we’ll pass the pans to pick up the chicken feed.” LaBelle Bebe and her sermon was like a birthday cake. There would be no cake served until the ransom money was paid.

The Kingfish claimed God gave him the gift of “taking up offerings.” “God simply got tired of our diet. Bebe would order soup and crackers. It was all we could afford. Bebe would eat the soup, and I’d eat the crackers!” This one never failed to bring more laughs. C. (for Cash) Tom Patten performed like an artist at extracting money from the people. He was the king of all cons that I had ever met or read about. Tom Patten even makes professional fundraisers for TBN and Daystar Christian television, like Mike Murdock and John Avanzini, appear mediocre by comparison.

During one of these Tom Cat performances of fleecing the flock, Patten exploded, “If I take this money and throw it in Lake Merritt, it is nobody’s business but mine!” He continued, “If you have plenty of money and a battery of smart lawyers, you can do anything and get by.” Of course, he was referring to his 501(c)(3) non-profit incorporation.

“And you’re going to stop him,” saith the Lord

Those words had hardly left his lips when God spoke to me as a student in the audience, “And

you're going to stop him!" Who? Me? I'm just the elevator boy trying to earn money enough to pay my tuition to finish Bible College. I don't have any money or any smart lawyers. How am I going to stop the Kingfish? However, I knew better than to keep on trying to reason with God. So, I pondered these words in my heart.

It reminded me of Gideon, who *"threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."* (Jdg. 6:11-12) Gideon was planting some seed behind the winepress, hidden from the eyes of the Midianites, so he would have some bread to survive. "Where is God coming from anyway?" Gideon would say to himself. "Thou mighty man of valour? Here I am, hiding out behind a winepress from the Midianites, to protect any wheat I sow for food to keep me and my family alive? A mighty man of valour?"

"And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Gideon answered, *"Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, MY FAMILY IS POOR in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."* (Jdg. 6:14-15) I felt exactly as Gideon when God spoke to me, "And you're going to stop him!"

Jesus said, "Swear not at all" (Matt. 5:34-37)

Whenever we raised our hand during a Patten offering, we were a debtor. My father raised his hand for a pledge to be paid when a piece of land he owned was sold. To our amazement, my father and I were ushered into the Patten's office and given the Ananias and Sapphira treatment. *"Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold..."* (Acts 5:4) The Patten's didn't even wait until it was sold. We were a debtor now! They wanted their money immediately! My dad had to borrow money at an exorbitant interest rate to pay the pledge he had made in church. However, he lived long enough to get his pound of flesh! He was by far the star witness for the defense in the conviction of Tom Patten on five counts of grand theft. My father and I represented one of the five counts. I'm getting my "pound of flesh" for what I endured for five years at the hands of these "little gods" and the Patten kingdom, by "preaching from the housetops" this message. (Matt. 10:27)

Of all the defense attorneys that Carl Thomas Patten, alias Jack Groves had, Attorney Leo Sullivan was feared the most by all the witnesses. However, my father finished him off! He never interrogated another witness for the rest of the trial, begging my dad for a "Yes" or a "No" answer to just one of his questions, "just for the record!"

God doesn't necessarily pay us on Friday, but He pays! *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these THINGS shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow."* (Matt. 6:33-34) I'm sure my father, who died at the age of 72, will receive as his pay, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of the Lord."* (Matt. 25:21)

My father stood 100% behind his son during a time of grave danger to my very life. Kingfish's warning to my father, "Get Gordon to back off! Somebody's gonna get hurt!"

The happiest day of my father's life!



Elof A. Hagglund, 53, who told a Superior Court jury he was "kicked out" of the Patten Bible School.

—Tribune photo.

Hagglund Airs Trust Deal at Trial

The ninth witness in the C. Thomas Patten grand theft trial testified today that he and his son were "taken for a ride" by Patten, at the end of which the Oakland Bible school operator declared:

"This is liable to get rough—and someone is liable to get hurt."

Elof A. Hagglund, 53-year-old shipyard worker, told the jury the statement was made to him a short time after he testified before the grand jury which indicted Patten, husband and business manager of Evangelist Bebe Patten, on 10 counts of grand theft.

Hagglund and his son, Gordon, are listed in the indictment as having lost some \$1500 in Patten's financial fagling.

Under the direct examination of Chief Asst. Dist. Atty. Richard H. Chamberlain, he got around to the "someone's going to get hurt" testimony just before the end of the morning session. Defense Attorney Leo Sullivan was scheduled to begin cross-examination this afternoon.

Elof Hagglund, prosecution witness in the C. Thomas Patten grand theft trial, today described Patten's evangelist wife Bebe as "a woman who wears them Jezebel garments and short hair."

Hagglund continued his story of the way Patten allegedly flected him giving long winded answers which frequently had the courtroom tittering.

Describing how he lost faith in the Pattens, Hagglund said:

"A woman preacher should dress modestly."

Hagglund led roars of laughter that swept over the courtroom including even Superior Judge Charles Wade Snook and causing Bailiff J. H. Fitzgerald to give up pounding for order as Hagglund told how he wrote Dr. Patten to "rile her up" and "get her mad as an old setting hen."

IN EVERY CITY

In that letter he wrote Dr. Patten about establishing a church in every city of the United States over 100,000 population, he testified.

"I was trying to outclass the Patten aircastles," he said.

"When we were in the Patten school," he continued, "we used to sit there like a bunch of children under a rod, and couldn't say a word. We had to have some way to explode. That letter was my way."

"Is that clear?" he asked Defense Attorney Leo Sullivan.

"You know how women are when you get them stirred up. They get their feathers ruffled like an old setting hen scared off the nest. I'd like to have seen the wife of the defendant" he almost roared, "after she got that letter."

"She'd of gone right up through the roof, if its humanly possible."

'PRAISE THE LORD'

"Praise the Lord," he shouted. "Glory to God, I was really having a good time."

Earlier Defense Attorney Sullivan questioned Hagglund about the tone of a letter he wrote the Pattens in 1946 while they were in Oklahoma conducting a revival. He got this answer:

"Well at that time I wanted to encourage them. They left here with plumes and banners flying. They came back like whipped pups with their tails between their legs. Something went wrong. Too much pride. She was not the woman she used to be. Her heart got big from the things that happened in Oakland and pride slipped in. She lost her spirit of humility."

WANTS SIMPLE ANSWER

A similar long discourse by Hagglund brought Sullivan's plea "give me a simple answer just one. Just 'yes' or 'no' for the record."

"Well," replied Hagglund, "do you want me to say 'yes' or 'no'?"

Then Hagglund continued:

"You keep setting bear traps for me. If I say 'yes' I put one foot in the trap. If I say 'no' I put the other one in. Which one do you prefer?"

Laughter brought about the morning recess.

Yesterday's session was not without similar merriment.

The first titter came when Hagglund responded to Sullivan's inference that it was queer the witness clearly recalled some dates and instances when he could not recall those Sullivan was asking about.

MENTAL WASTEBASKET

"Wal," Hagglund drawled, "I've got a wastepaper basket in my mind I sort of dump unimportant things into."

Just then the telephone slipped off the desk of Court Clerk W. W. Vaughan and fell into an empty tin wastebasket.

Later as Sullivan pressed to have Hagglund establish definitely whether he had heard Patten or his evangelist wife first mention purchase of the City Club Hotel for a church, the witness declared:

"I can't remember. There's been a lot of water over the bridge since then."

"Must have been a lot of people drowned if the water was over the bridge," Sullivan retorted.

"What did Patten or his wife say about purchasing the City Club?" Sullivan continued.

"Them was wonderful words," the big shipyard worker declared. "They said the City Club would remain a church till the hinges rotted off the door, or the doors rotted off the hinges, or the doors rotted off the building, or something such."

"Statements like that, that come to me first-hand," the witness volunteered, "stand out in my mind like bright lights."

CONFUSED LIGHTS

"Now, now," replied Sullivan as he seized triumphantly upon the opportunity. "That's what I want. Tell me who said that . . . the time the neon light flashed on in your mind."

Hagglund arched an eye toward the ceiling and thought for several seconds.

"Wal," he finally answered, "sometimes the bright lights get confused with other bright lights and form a sort of cluster."

The audience sputtered in restrained laughter as the bailiff cast a menacing eye toward them. But the "audible smiles" spread to the jury and court attendees.

'GETTING PRETTY CLOSE'

On another occasion as the defense attorney sought to establish a date by offering extremes between which it may have occurred, the witness replied, "Well, you're getting pretty close."

"Fine," Sullivan responded, "now you tell me when I get warm."

As Sullivan sought to bring out whether the witness had discussed his testimony with his son, Gordon, who lives in the same apartment house, he asked if they had not talked about the case at the dinner table.

"What did you do Friday night?" the attorney asked.

After his usual pause, Hagglund thought out loud, "Let's see, what did we do Friday night?"

SITUATION REVERSED

"I don't know," responded Sullivan, reversing the situation.

"I don't make any mental note of unimportant things," Hagglund insisted.

"But you did have dinner Friday with Gordon, didn't you?"

"I might have if Gordon was there," the witness responded. "Sometimes I eat upstairs and sometimes I eat downstairs. If I ate downstairs, I probably ate with Gordon. If I ate upstairs I didn't. Then sometimes I eat in the dining room and sometimes I eat in the kitchen. I'm under cross . . . I wouldn't want to make a mistake."

Sullivan kept hammering at the question of whether the witness had discussed the case with his son. Hagglund said he believed they both went to church and if Gordon was there he probably saw him. In all probability he did.

"What time did you get home from church?" Sullivan asked.

"Pretty late," Hagglund responded.

"About 4 a.m.?"

Hagglund laughed out loud. "Not that early."

"What time then?"

"I believe I got home the same day I went," Hagglund said.

It is wiser to marry a heathen virgin than a tongue talking Christian fornicator

My father married a non-believer, which was the reason I refused to carry his name, Hagglund. However, through time, I've learned that my father made a wiser choice than I did. It is far better to

marry a heathen woman who is a virgin, than to marry an Assemblies of God tongue talking fornicator. If my mother had not been a virgin, she would never have stuck by my Dad's side to the end. If I had not been a virgin, my marriage would not have lasted 30 days instead of 30 years. Do we have to restore the Jewish dowry to insure the father's responsibility? A virgin has not eaten of the forbidden fruit, hence the eyes are closed to evil.

Whenever you go to messing in a Pentecostal fire by probing about "the gold of the temple," and what kind of government exists in the church, snakes will appear. In Acts 28:3-5, Apostle Paul was messing around with a fire, and *"there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his (the captain's) hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast (the Tom-cat) into the fire (San Quentin), and felt no harm."* And the prophecy literally came to pass that God spoke to me as a student, "And you're going to stop him!"

Probe into a Pentecostal fire, and the heat brings out a viper

You can probe into a "Pentecostal fire" that is going on in your city by inquiring into who owns the church. Don't be surprised when you share your findings with another what you found recorded at the Secretary of State's office. You'll suddenly discover *"there came a viper out of the heat (your probing created), and fastened on his (your) hand."* What do you think the barbarians of the Patten College and Seminary thought about me when they saw this "venomous beast" hanging from my hand? How can I dare call these students barbarians? Read Matthew 7:21-23, *"And then will I profess unto them, I NEVER KNEW YOU: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (legality-violation of the law)."* These *"despise dominion"* (government).(Jude 8)

One is in violation of the law by being a "little god." In reality, he is a king, and you are his subjects in his domain. No man is holy enough to own God's house. How do these preachers even have the audacity to even call it God's house when they own it?

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Let me ask you one question. How can you know you're doing God's will when you've never heard His voice? You're just doing your own thing, only a bit different from the heathen. *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils (even spoke in tongues)? and in thy name done many wonderful works?"* (Matt. 7:21-22) Jesus is talking about and describing the present day Pentecostal church, the fastest growing religion in the world today. We have worldwide Christian television on TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Network), and on Daystar Television. Don't you think God knew about you? Matthew 7:21-23 vindicates the prophecy that this gospel *"shall be preached in all the world for a WITNESS unto all nations."* (Matt. 24:14) You'll see this revival on Christian television, but it can never bring us to the unity of the faith. Only the church can do that. The church, to be the church, must have government.

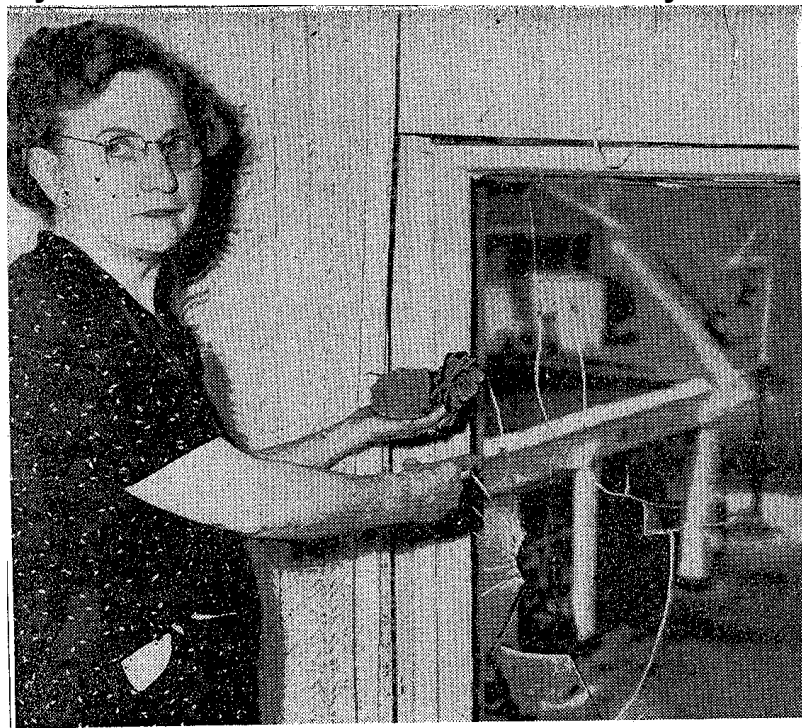
Christian television teaches that the only real sin is to judge your brother. (This is in keeping with their Masonic pledge.) Even if one of their star performers says, "Jesus is an emaciated worm crawling around in hell begging for forgiveness as a sinner," so be it. *"For he that made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."* (2 Cor. 5:21) "Now," says Kenneth Copeland, "we have a sinner on our hands." How is

Jesus to rid Himself of being a sinner? No one dares to judge lest a venomous beast come out of the fire stirred up by their judgment. *"Judge not, that ye be not judged"* (Matt. 7:1), was a warning to those incapable of "righteous judgment," who were the scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!

The barbarians never blamed the venomous beast dangling from Paul's hand. They blamed the Apostle Paul, calling him a murderer. (Acts 28:4) They forgot all about how God had miraculously saved them while in a storm at sea. *"Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me... And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you... For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve."* (Acts 27:21-23) LaBelle Bebe declared I was Judas, who took the sop, by my going to the D.A.

With this venomous beast, C. (for Cash) Thomas Patten, dangling from my hand, my brother-in-law, the Reverend Denman Mapson, took flight for higher ground, the Assemblies of God. He was a member of the "Go ye class." When D.H. saw that venomous beast dangling from my hand, he went! It was in his car we drove up to Carson City, Nev., where I married his oldest sister. The Reverend D.H. Mapson was the best man, along with his wife, as the witnesses to my marriage, just like in the dream God gave me. Now just why would one, who is now an Assemblies of God preacher, be involved in my dream of my wedding? He'd like to forget that he was ever so stupid as to be involved with the Patten's. Just as LaBelle Bebe disowned any connection with Aimee Semple McPherson's Bible School where she graduated. She didn't want to be regarded as a McPherson protégé. Why did D.H., as he liked to be called, split after I married his sister? Mission accomplished? The entire family suddenly split! Wow! I thought I was Moses leading the Mapsons out of Minnesota to the promised land (California). Instead, I discovered from the baby brother I was the sheep being led to the slaughter.

My heathen mama did not run! She stood by her son in his darkest hour.



VANDALISM—Mrs. Elof Hagglund holds a rock with a red rose attached which was tossed through a window of her Oakland home.

Her husband and son were witnesses in the fraud trial of Evangelist C. Thomas Patten, now awaiting sentence on five counts of grand theft.

—Photo by San Francisco Examiner.

THREATS MADE IN PATTEN CASE

A rock with a red rose tied to it was hurled through the front room window of a witness against Evangelist C. Thomas Patten, Oakland police said yesterday.

The rose is a symbol of vengeance among followers of Patten, now in the county jail awaiting sentencing on five counts of grand theft.

The witness was Elof A. Hagglund, of 817 East Twentyfourth Street, Oakland. He and his son, Gordon, testified that Patten had fleeced them of \$1,500.

THREATS MADE.

Mrs. Hagglund had just arisen at midnight Tuesday to answer the telephone. It was a woman caller making the third of a series of telephone threats.

"You rotten liar — get out of town or we'll blow your house up," the voice warned.

HAT FOUND.

Just then the rock and rose shattered the window, scattering glass all over the room.

Police found a man's gray hat outside and were attempting to locate its owner. District Attorney J. Frank Coakley said he would prosecute the culprit if found.

This is the latest of a series of demonstrations growing out of the Patten trial.

Mrs. Ruth Hagglund, a Swedish immigrant, came to America when she was 15, not knowing one word of English. This picture of her holding a rock with a rose tied to it, hit the front page of the S.F. Examiner in the fall of 1949. The rose was a symbol of LaBelle Bebe. It was hurled by the president of the student body at midnight, just prior to a phone call that awakened us.

“Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” Your children, going to a public school, likewise wish to be exactly like the heathen. They hear what you are saying, but want to conform. You should home school your children if you wish for them to acquire a different value system than in the world. The students at Columbia University this past week show how effective the teachers are in brainwashing our youth.

“Now make us a king to judge us,” Samuel. *“But the thing (the request) displeased Samuel...And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.”* (1 Sam. 8:5-6) The people were tired of the thirteen judges God had raised up to rule the people. *“And be not conformed to this world”* (Rom. 12:2), but the people wanted to be like the nations around them. They all had kings!

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.” (1 Sam. 8:7) *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.”* (1 Sam. 15:23)

It is the people who are in rebellion to God and want a king to go before them. *“According to all the works which they have done,”* God is saying, *“since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith THEY HAVE FORSAKEN ME, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.”* (1 Sam. 8:8)

Are you hearing what God is saying? *“They have forsaken me* (by requesting for another king), *and (by doing so) served other gods* (the new king).” E.W. Kenyon was correcting in naming these “lords” by their real name, “little gods,” thus bringing to pass one of the oldest prophecies in scripture, *“Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”* I’m convinced that many Christians believe they have been born again simply because, *“then your eyes shall be opened.”* (Gen. 3:5) Now, you know both good and evil. I never heard the word “buncoed” until I overheard the Kingfish use the word regarding me. “Gordon buncoed on me!” Meaning I went to the District Attorney’s office. He continued, “Believe me, I’d have shot a man that would do that to me when I was in the world!” The Bible says, *“He that (continually) committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.”* (1 Jn. 3:8)

God is further instructing Samuel, *“Now therefore hearken unto their voice...and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.”*

“He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” (1 Sam. 8:9-20)



“This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you.” (1 Sam. 8:11)

“Today it is Hollywood, tomorrow Wall Street.” (Matthew Crouch) One Night With A King, the story of Esther, premieres on October 13, 2006. “Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language (glossolalia)...and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” (Gen. 11:6)

LA Times - September 29, 2004

ORANGE COUNTY

Watchdog Group Wants TBN Leaders to Step Aside

Televangelists reject the request. Wall Watchers seeks reforms and an inquiry into finances.
By William Lobdell, Times Staff Writer

A church watchdog group recommended Tuesday that Jan and Paul Crouch step aside as leaders of Orange County-based Trinity Broadcasting Network while a panel of Christian leaders investigates its finances.

An executive for TBN, the world's largest Christian network, rejected the idea but said he would meet with critics and review audited financial statements and other related documents with them. "We will turn over to them whatever we need to turn over," said Paul Crouch Jr., a network executive.

Wall Watchers, a North Carolina group that monitors the finances of more than 500 Christian nonprofits, proposed the series of reforms in response to recent stories in The Times that detailed the Crouches' luxury lifestyle.

The stories have reported that the network takes in far more money than it spends and provided a \$425,000 settlement to a former employee who said he had had a homosexual encounter with Paul Crouch. The televangelist has denied the accuser's claim.

Wall Watchers, a nonprofit organization founded in 1998, provides donors with independent financial analyses of ministries. In addition to ranking ministries for financial stability and openness, Wall Watchers officials warn donors about some Christian nonprofits.

Last year, for instance, Wall Watchers and news reports raised concerns about the finances of Joyce Meyer Ministries, which then released its 2002 audited financial statement.

Wall Watchers officials recommended that TBN revamp its board of directors, which consists of Jan and Paul Crouch and his sister, Ruth Brown, to be independent of the Crouch family. The group also proposed that the network stop relying on the "prosperity gospel" — a religious principle that donors will receive financial rewards from God by giving money to TBN — for fundraising.

"The new board should ... complete a thorough overhaul of the ministry to put it on a path to teaching authentic Christian theology and operating in a manner that rejects self-serving financial transactions and embraces sound management practices," the organization said in a statement scheduled to be released today.

Crouch, who has run the network for 31 years, has maintained tight control over TBN since the 1970s, when he survived a series of attempted board takeovers.

TBN officials said the ministry already had extensive independent oversight. Its tax records and executive salaries are public record. And TBN's finances are audited annually by accounting firms and available to the public, officials said.

"Trinity has more accountability and oversight than virtually any other organization, regardless of size," according to a TBN statement.

Howard "Rusty" Leonard, chief executive of Wall Watchers, praised TBN for offering to share financial information with his group.

"We've called TBN many times asking for information" without success, he said. "It's a wonderful turn of events."

But Wall Watcher officials said that if TBN didn't adequately address their concerns involving donor money, they would ask the IRS and relevant state attorneys general to investigate whether "the ministry's charitable purpose, rather than the Crouches' reported lavish lifestyle, is being diligently pursued."