

Kenneth Hagin and “Positive Confession”

By Dave Hunt

(from *Occult Invasion*, Harvest House, 1998)

Among charismatics, the largest churches and the most popular ministers on radio and TV tend to be those associated with what is known as “Positive Confession,” or the “Faith movement.” Positive Confession is simply Norman Vincent Peale’s Positive Thinking carried one step further: expressing the thoughts aloud. Kenneth Hagin is generally credited with founding this latter movement, and his teachings have an authority among his followers almost equal to that of Mary Baker Eddy among hers.

Frederick K. C. Price says: “Kenneth Hagin has had the greatest influence upon my life of any living man... his books ... revolutionized and changed my life.” Charles Capps gives a similar testimony: “Brother Hagin was the greatest influence of my life.”²⁶ Kenneth Copeland credits Hagin’s tapes with having revolutionized his ministry.²⁷

Kenneth Hagin’s gospel can be traced back to the writings of E.W. Kenyon, who first taught “the positive confession of the Word of God”²⁸ and must be recognized as the real founder of today’s Positive Confession movement. Kenyon studied at the Emerson College of Oratory in Boston, a hotbed of the emerging New Thought philosophy.²⁹ Kenyon’s teaching about “the power of words” and his warnings never to make a “negative confession”³⁰ deeply influenced Hagin and many others who are recognized today as leaders of this movement. Kenyon also taught that man is a little god “in God’s Class” and therefore can use the same faith-force that God does.³¹ We allegedly create our own reality with the words of our mouths: “What I confess, I possess.”³²

Hagin complains that people often think he is teaching Christian Science. He claims he is not, yet he teaches that the power of God works according to laws. Science is based upon laws. Thus, if what Hagin teaches about God’s power being governed by laws is indeed “Christian,” then it must be “Christian Science.”

“Positive Confession” means to verbalize positive thought and speak it aloud—precisely what shamans have believed and practiced for thousands of years in all cultures. The connection with the Positive/Possibility Thinking taught by Peale and Schuller is acknowledged by Kenneth Hagin, Jr.:

Somebody will argue, “You’re talking about positive thinking!” That’s right! I am acquainted with the greatest Positive Thinker who ever was: God...!

The two most prominent teachers of positive thinking [Peale and Schuller] are ministers.³³

The entire “Faith movement” rests upon the occult belief that “faith is a force just like electricity or gravity”³⁴ which obeys laws, and thus even non-Christians can use it. David Yonggi Cho, pastor of the world’s largest church, located in Seoul, Korea, declares: “Think positively and prosper.” Cho’s brand of Christian Science is based upon “the law of the fourth dimension,” a law which both Christians and non-Christians can follow in order to create miracles. He says, “Sokagakkai [a Buddhist sect] has applied the law of the fourth dimension and has performed miracles... .”³⁵ The Sokagakkai are occultists.

The *Wall Street Journal* observed that Cho’s Christianity has elements of Korean shamanism in it.³⁶ Kenneth Hagin also acknowledges that his variety of Christian science (as must be the case with any science) likewise allows non-Christians to obtain miracles by

scientifically applying its laws. Hagin writes:

It used to bother me when I'd see unsaved people getting results [miracles], but my church members not getting results. Then it dawned on me what the sinners were doing: They were cooperating with this law of God—the law of faith.³⁷

A “Law of Miracles”?

The blessings of God's natural order (sun, rain, etc.) fall “on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). His miracles, however, are special blessings of His grace which are reserved for those who know and love Him. God will not extend His grace and blessing to those who reject Him. The “laws of faith,” however, according to the Positive Confession leaders, work for anyone, saint or sinner, just like the laws of science.

The teaching that non-Christians can create miracles by following “God's laws of faith” or the “laws of the fourth dimension” is a serious heresy. Tragically, this tempting lie opens the door into the occult, where evil spirits gladly respond with a seeming “miracle” in order to deceive and seduce the unsuspecting into further delusions.

Charismatic leaders who imagine they have discovered *laws* of faith are promoting a Christianized version of naturalism. Their “God” is not the transcendent Creator who exists outside of the physical universe which He created out of nothing (as Sir James Jeans argues *must* be the case). The “faith God” is tied to this physical universe and bound by its laws. John and Paula Sanford, well-known practitioners of “inner healing,” profess this irrational heresy as clearly as anyone:

Miracles happen by the cooperation, union, and interplay of spirit and matter together.... Confused... men have thought... there had to be a violation of principles for miracles to happen.... What rot and bunk! Miracles happen by releasing power within matter according to God's principles....

Nature, being filled with the Spirit of God, has immeasurable power, locked within its tiniest cells.... Miracles happen by the operation of the Holy Spirit within principles far beyond our ability to comprehend but nonetheless scientific....

I have sometimes been called a Christian Scientist when lecturing on these subjects....³⁸

The Charismatic's “Mary Baker Eddy”

The Sandfords studied under Agnes Sanford, the charismatic's Mary Baker Eddy. She is the founder of the Inner Healing movement in the church. Her serious heresies are too numerous to recite here, yet she remains highly honored in the evangelical church to this day. John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement, enthusiastically promoted her books until his recent death. Much like Norman Vincent Peale, Sanford calls God “the very life-force existing in a radiation of an energy... from which all things evolved.”³⁹ She declares that “God... made everything out of Himself and somehow He put a part of Himself into everything.”⁴⁰ This is pantheism.

To substantiate such heresies, Sanford cites Jesuit priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as her authority. Declared a heretic even by the Roman Catholic Church, Chardin was known as the father of the New Age movement. Sanford taught that the “God-force” can be turned on in one's life by simply saying to it, “Whoever you are—whatever you are—come into me now!” What a great invitation to Satan! The true God, who identifies Himself clearly in Scripture and must be known and acknowledged for who He is, would not answer such a call—but Satan and his minions, who hide behind any mask, would gladly accept that invitation.

Bringing occultism into the church, Sanford taught that everything is a matter of thought vibrations which if “negative” make us ill, and if “positive” heal us. Indeed, “positive thought vibrations” projected upon sinners can even turn them into Christians. Sanford wrote, “A new age is being born... when love-power [projected] at the command of ministers [and others] is sufficient to change hearts... we [have] an inner source of power that can be tapped at will.”⁴¹

Notes:

26. Taped interviews on file at the Holy Spirit Research Center, Oral Roberts University cited in Daniel Ray McConnell, *The Kenyon Connection: A Theological and Historical Analysis of the Cultic Origins of the Faith Movement* a thesis submitted to the Theological Faculty Oral Roberts University Tulsa, OK, May 1982, p. 11.
27. McConnell, *Kenyon Connection*, p. 11.
28. E.W. Kenyon and Don Cossett, *The Positive Confession of the Word of God* (Tulsa: Custom Graphics, 1981), pp.133-37, 152-55.
29. John Coffee and Richard L. Wentworth, *A Century of Eloquence: The History of Emerson College, 1880-1980* (Alternative Publications, 1982).
30. Kenyon and Gossett, *Confession*, pp. 129-36, 152-55, 182-85, etc.
31. E.W. Kenyon, *what Happened from the Cross to the Throne?* (Kenyon, 1945, 5th ed.), pp. 62, 173-76.
32. E.W. Kenyon, *The Hidden Man: An Unveiling of the Subconscious Mind* (Kenyon, 1970), p. 98.
33. *The Word of Faith* magazine, November 1984, p. 3.
34. Kenneth Copeland on TBN interview with Paul and Jan Crouch, February 5, 1986.
35. Dr. David Yonggi Cho, *The Fourth Dimension* (Bridge-Logos International, 1979), pp. 30, 64.
36. Urban C. Lehner, “New Faithful: Static in Some Nations, Christianity is Surging Among South Koreans,” in *The Wall Street Journal*, May 12, 1983.
37. Kenneth Hagin, *Having Faith in Your Faith* (Rhema, 1980), pp. 3-4.
38. John and Paula Sanford, *The Elijah Task* (Logos International, 1977), pp. 142-3.
39. Agnes Sanford, *The Healing Gifts of the Spirit* (Fleming H. Revell, 1966), p. 22.
40. Ibid., p. 27.
41. *The Healing Light*, 1947 edition, pp. 21-22, 60, 75.