

Ten Reasons NOT To Reject Word-of-Faith Teachings

A Response to the tract written by Tricia Tillin Titled “Ten Reasons To Reject Word-of-Faith Teachings”

Reason 4: It Advocates Our Union In Christ

Tillin's fourth reason for rejecting the Faith movement is due to her belief that "It elevates man to equality with Jesus." She further claims that as, "A consequence of the 'Jesus-died-spiritually' doctrine is that all born-again Christians stand in the same place of power and authority as Jesus - *not by virtue of their unity with Him*, but in themselves, as men filled with the Spirit." (Emphasis mine)

We can add another *false accusation* to Ms. Tillin's expanding list. While Ms. Tillin claims that the faith teachers do not teach that their "equality" is the result of their unity with Christ, the late Kenneth E. Hagin did in fact teach just that:

In the New birth, *we are brought into vital union with Jesus Christ*. All that most people think they have in the new birth is forgiveness of sins. They don't know about *being in union with God*.¹ (Emphasis mine)

Friends, we are sons of God. We are children of God. We are born of God. *We are in union with God*² (Italics are Hagin's)

Christ is the Head; we are the Body. We are one with Christ, joined with Him in a living union.³

Understanding this "equality" as a result of our union helps us to better grasp what faith teachers are saying. They are certainly not saying that you and I are equal to God in His power attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence), nor are they implying that we are deities worthy of worship as God is. In their own language, they are addressing a fundamental Bible truth, which is our union in Christ.

Some discernment ministries have chided the late Kenneth E. Hagin for teaching that man was "created on terms of equality with God." Yet, viewing his statement in context, we will see that Hagin does not fail to recognize man's subordinate position to God. In a chapter ironically titled *Ruling and Reigning in Union with God*, Hagin writes:

We are accepted by God to reign as kings in life. We are no longer servants in the realm of spiritual death, but we have passed out of death, Satan's realm, into the realm of the heavenlies. Man was never made to be a slave. *He was made to reign as king under God*. *He was made on terms of equality with God*, and he could stand in God's presence without any consciousness of inferiority.⁴ (Emphasis mine)

Hagin further writes, "*God made man His understudy*. He made him king, to rule over everything that had life. Man was master. Man lived in the realm of God. *He lived*

¹ Hagin, Kenneth E. *Zoe: The God-Kind of Life* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1989), p. 40

² Ibid, p. 45

³ Hagin, Kenneth E. *The Name of Jesus* (Tulsa, OK: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1979), p. 106

⁴ Hagin, *Zoe*, p. 35

on terms of equality with God."⁵ While Hagin uses the phrase "terms of equality with God," he is never insinuating that man is equal with God in power, authority, or essence. Hagin recognizes man's subordination when he uses such phrases as "king under God" and "God's understudy."

The late U. S. President Woodrow Wilson is quoted as saying, "You cannot be friends upon any other terms than upon the terms of equality."⁶ President Wilson's desire to have friends on "terms of equality" did not make his friends "presidents" or equal to such a position. Jesus Himself tells us that our relationship is more than master to servant – it is also friendship with Him (John 15:13-15). There must be some level of equality in friendship. Though Jesus elevates us to the level of friends and thereby gives us some terms of equality, we still recognize Him as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The Scriptures recognize these "'terms of equality' while remaining subordinate" relationship that comes as a result of our union in Christ:

In this [union and communion with Him] love is brought to completion and attains perfection with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment [with assurance and boldness to face Him], because as He is, so are we in this world. (1 John 4:17; The Amplified Bible)

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me ... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. (John 17:21, 23)

God has brought us back to life together with Christ Jesus and has given us a position in heaven with him (Eph. 2:6; God's Word translation)

Concerning our position in "Heavenly places, the following comment by Martin Luther is very interesting:

Observe, what great transcendent comfort we have in that God awakens in us also the same power he exercises in Christ, and bestows upon us equal authority. As he made him sit in heavenly places, above all power and might, and everything that can be named; so has he invested us also with the same power, that those who believe have all power over heaven and earth.⁷

Luther seems to use similar language as Hagin to describe a principle of Scripture. We could cite several more scriptures to make this point (Rom. 8:16, 17, 29; 1 Cor. 3:9; Heb. 2:11; Col. 2:10-12; Matt. 21:21, 22; John 14:12). However, it might interest the reader to see how other church leaders besides Luther have described this union in Christ:

⁵ Ibid, p. 36

⁶ From **Citizenship & Character: Equality Quotes.** Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), 28th president of US (1913-1921).

⁷ Luther, Martin **The Sermons of Martin Luther Vol. II** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1906), p. 361

We hold that a man is justified by faith. This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he. (Martin Luther)⁸

It is plain that to be in Christ justified, is far more than pardon or even reconciliation; it includes being counted as just, and put upon the same standing as Christ, before God. (Arthur T. Pierson)⁹

Two words are used in the New Testament to describe sonship. One word means a born son. But the other word means much more. The second word for sonship is almost always applied to Christ's sonship, and is rarely used of anybody else but Jesus; but it is also used to denote those who enter into union with Christ. Not only are they born the children of God, but they are accepted in the same sense in which Christ is: that is, they have not only the sonship of the new birth, but the place of Christ Himself. (A. B. Simpson)¹⁰

The men cited above believe we have the same righteousness that Christ has, the same standing before God that He has, and the same acceptance and place that Christ has. Such phrases could be defined as “terms of equality.” Yet, these same men believe in Christ’s Lordship over the church. So did Kenneth Hagin. In the same book in which he uses the phrase “terms of equality,” Hagin also exalts the Lordship of Christ:

Receiving Jesus is an act of the will of man, acting on the Word. You know that you're without an approach to God, without eternal life; and you just look up to God and say, "I know that." But it is not enough just to take Jesus as your Savior. You also must acknowledge His lordship over your life.¹¹

The above should clear up any misunderstanding of Hagin’s statement. Hagin’s understanding of “terms of equality” is no different than the statements made by Luther, Pierson, or Simpson’s. Hagin recognized Jesus as *Lord* and thus, our subordinate position.

Copeland has also garnered some controversy for similar statements. One critic quotes a statement that Copeland made on his television broadcast: “Let this mind be in Kenneth Copeland, Oh my goodness, Ah! that thinks its not robbery to be called equal with God.”¹² While this statement is definitely controversial, we should approach it in the light of Copeland’s theology as a whole. Copeland, like Hagin, certainly recognizes his subordinate position before Christ:

We will never get anywhere shaking our fists in God's face. But when we get before Him and say, I love you. ***You are the King of my life.*** I will go anywhere You tell me to go, and I will do anything You tell me to do," God will respond compassionately.¹³

⁸ Dillenberger, John **Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings** (New York: Anchor Books (Doubleday), 1962), pp. 87, 88. The sermon was titled “*Two Kinds of Righteousness.*”

⁹ Pierson, Arthur T. **In Christ Jesus.** From Chapter 1, Epistle to the Romans. Originally published in 1898. Now available on <http://www.posword.org>

¹⁰ Simpson, Albert B. **The Christ Life** (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1980), p. 30

¹¹ Hagin, *Zoe*, p. 29

¹² Kenneth Copeland, Believer's Voice of Victory, Monday 29th January 2001 [GOD TV] As quoted by WoF critic David McCallister of the Belfast Berean (www.belfastberean.co.uk/copeland3.htm)

¹³ Copeland, Kenneth **Believer's Voice of Victory** (Magazine) Vol. 31 No. 4 (Fort Worth, Texas, April 2003), p. 3

Despite the controversy that is generated through such phrases as “equality with God,” one must, in fairness, examine *all* that is being taught before passing judgment. Critics should stop overreacting to statements that seemingly conflict with *their* doctrinal beliefs.