

PROMISE KEEPERS

A Powerful Ecumenical Thrust That Promotes Romanism!

Promise Keepers is sweeping America! It has been called "the nation's fastest-growing Christian phenomenon." Though we can rejoice that some men may get their lives turned around, we must ask the all-important question: Is it of God?

Many believers say they think Promise Keepers (PK) is good, even fantastic! The purpose of the organization is "to unite men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world." PK calls men to commit to "the three non-negotiables of manhood: integrity, commitment, and action." This certainly does sound fantastic! The need for Christian men to develop strong character in their personal lives and leadership in their home, their church, and their community, is probably one of the greatest needs today.

Looking beneath that fantastic surface, however, there are very serious dangers. To get to the heart of PK, one must observe carefully, what else they are saying. Who are their leaders? What do those leaders stand for? Many have asked these questions. They have taken another look and are finding that what appeared to be so fantastic has turned out to be most dangerous.

We are convinced that PK is perhaps the most powerful thrust thus far to break down the barriers to the one world church of anti-Christ!

In a day when a high percentage of men, for whatever reason, are frustrated at not being able to lead and provide for their families as they had dreamed, it is understandable that they would respond positively to the atmosphere of a PK conference.

The Perilous Times publication out of South Carolina describes a PK National Men's Conference where about 50,000 men filled the stadium:

"The mood is festive as large beach balls are punched with vigor, sending them on a never-ending course throughout the crowd a styrofoam glider wafts its way from the upper regions, accompanied by oohs and aahs.

A small group of men on one side of the stadium begins to chant: 'We love Jesus; yes we do! We love Jesus; how 'bout you?' The shout grows louder as more voices join in. Soon the other side of the stadium picks up the challenge. No one wins; it's a tie as to which side shouts loudest

A ripple begins to form in one corner, before long it makes its way into a wave, circling the stadium, as men rise from their seats, arms raised, to shout.

The appointed time to begin the program has come and gone, but there is no impatience as the men are caught up in the festivities. It's a warm summer day; everyone is having fun. So what's the rush?

Suddenly a low rumble (is it thunder?) begins softly and becomes louder. It's the sound of a jet aircraft piercing the stadium from the huge speakers strategically placed for maximum effectiveness. The large screen displays the takeoff of a jumbo jet as the announcer welcomes the crowd to the flight for restored manhood.

The stadium, full now, erupts in a cheer. These men have come for something special."

By now those in attendance are eager for what is to come. This atmosphere has been cleverly orchestrated by the leaders. Who are the leaders? University of Colorado football coach. Bill McCartney is credited with the founding of the movement Randy Phillips, president and administrator, is a pastor. He led the Denver Broncos' Bible study for two years. Both are former Roman Catholics and members of Boulder Valley Vineyard Fellowship (more about that later).

It is obvious that this movement is superbly organized and has tremendous financial resources at its disposal. PK speakers are very capable communicators and seasoned motivators--their combined talents provide an amazing base for publicity and continued support.

The idea of filling a stadium with Christian men first came to Bill McCartney and Dave Wardell, Ph.D. in the summer of 1990 while they were on a three-hour car ride to a meeting of Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Later that year, 72 men began to pray and fast about the concept of thousands of men coming together for the purpose of Christian discipleship. 4,200 men met at the University of Colorado Events Center in 1991. At Folsom Stadium 22,000 met in 1992. Then 50,000 filled the Stadium to capacity in 1993. In 1994, seven sites nationwide brought a total attendance of 278,600 men. This year (1995) PK has scheduled 13 conferences across the country with an attendance of up to 750,000 projected. Next year they plan to have 1,000,000 men attend a rally in Washington, DC as a witness to the nation of God's power in the lives of men. The organization requires at least 175 full time staff members and a \$22 million budget. 90-second "Promise Keepers Men in Action" spot announcements are aired daily on approximately 400 radio stations-FREE! Nearly every Christian Bookstore in the nation is promoting PK materials. It is an organization that has grown quickly and is expected to continue doing so. "Is it of God?" is an essential question that must be answered. If it is not, then Christians should not only avoid it but warn against it.

We do not believe PK is of God. We believe that it is dangerous to the cause of Christ. It is not easy to make these statements. Doing so is not the popular thing to do. Not very many are interested in sounding warnings these days. If PK is right about Roman Catholicism, Catholics are saved and there is no need to reach them with the Gospel. In fact, if PK is right about Roman Catholicism, all non-Catholic churches should merge and become one with Rome. There is no reason for separation if the Bible does not teach it!

Promise Keeper's stated goal is the unifying of all who love Jesus and claim to be born again, regardless of denominational affiliation. Such a passion for visible unity obligates them to refuse to stand up against the heresies of Rome. Their literature seems to accept the Roman Catholic system as legitimate: "One of the core values of Promise Keepers is honoring the pastors and priests of our local congregations." Acknowledging the legitimacy of Rome's priesthood is an act of treason to God and

Scripture. It discredits the sufficiency and non-transferable nature of Christ's priesthood. Promise Keepers is playing right into the Vatican's hands as the "Mother Church". It is one of the latest and most subtle attempts to break down the Biblical differences between ecumenism and Biblical Christianity under the purpose of building strong men and families.

At the PK convention in Portland, while calling for the pastors to go forward for prayer, Bill McCartney, speaking to the pastors (including Roman Catholic priests) said: "We cannot rightly divide the word of truth. We need you to teach us." If this statement does not shock you, you need to check out how much you know and believe the Bible. Take a look at II Timothy 2:15. Take a look at the Bereans, who searched the Word daily to determine whether or not the teachings of Paul conformed. Why would McCartney boldly contradict Scripture like that? Could it be that he is promoting the philosophy of the Roman Catholic religion in which he was raised? PK's official policy on Roman Catholicism is basically one of "hands-off" toward evangelizing Roman Catholics.

McCartney said he thought that perhaps the Lord's main purpose for PK was to gather His clergy. All the pastors in attendance were asked to go down to the stage. The crowd sang and yelled for ten minutes while about 3,000 pastors (treated like celebrities) made their way to the front. McCartney had them hold up their hands to the crowd and a blessing was pronounced on the people. (This sounds innocent enough until one realizes the unlikelihood of all those clergy being saved. This would include Catholic priests as well as others. I don't know about you, but I'm not interested in being "blessed" by 3,000 clergymen. Perhaps the majority of those men were Charismatic and in serious doctrinal error and likely involved in demonic deception.) The possibility of spreading demonic spirits in this fashion is not to be lightly considered. But that is not all. The pastors then knelt for prayer and a confession of sin, for not carrying out their office faithfully and "putting up barriers on account of denominational dogma" Imagine praying for forgiveness for being a pastor who is not doctrinally indifferent! There was waving of thousands of hats in the stadium and a screaming liturgy of the crowd "we love you," and the pastors responding "we love you."

Should one not denounce an organization whose key speakers make unscriptural statements which are not corrected? Note the following:

"Whether your tradition celebrates. . . Eucharist, the Mass, or the Lord's Supper, we are all called to this centerpiece of Christian worship." --Dr. Jack Hayford.

"I believe Jesus was phallic with all the inherent phallic passions we experience as men. . . If temptation means anything, it means Christ was tempted in every way as we are. That would mean not only heterosexual temptation but also homosexual temptation!" --Robert Hicks, author of *The Masculine Journey* (This book was distributed to each man who attended the 1993 convention in Colorado.) One wonders at the seeming, tolerance of homosexuality within the leadership/teaching ranks of PK (See I Cor. 5:9-11 and 6:9, 10.)

"What I know is that Almighty God wants to bring Christian men together regardless of their ethnic origin, denominational background, or style of worship. There's only one criterion for this kind of unity: to love Jesus and be born of the Spirit of God. Can we look one another in the eye-black, white, red,

brown, and yellow. Baptist, Presbyterian. Assemblies of God, Catholic, and so on--and get together on this common ground: "We believe in salvation through Christ alone, and we have made Him the Lord of our lives'? Is that not the central unifying reality of our existence? And if it is, can we not focus on that and call each other brothers instead of always emphasizing our differences? Men, we have to get together on this!" --Bill McCartney (Note the contradiction concerning the necessity of believing in salvation through Christ alone--and then including Roman Catholics as "brothers" in spite of the fact that they do not believe in salvation through Christ alone, adding sacraments and good works as requirements for salvation on one hand and on the other hand teaching that anyone who is sincere and good. Christian, pagan, or atheist, will go to heaven.) Throughout the centuries, the Roman Catholic religion has been an enemy of all true believers and the blood of hundreds of thousands, even millions of martyrs is upon its' hands. However, for the past few decades, the Roman Catholic Church has changed its outward appearance and approaches. It has a new face of tolerance and a kindlier public image. But the damnable heresies it proclaims remain as dangerous as ever. Furthermore, those who are only familiar with Roman Catholicism, as practiced in America, would not believe the raw heathenism which is part of their worship in other countries where they have been in control for centuries. It should be of great concern to every Biblical Christian to know that the PK movement is taught and led by men who blindly praise the Pope and are giving Roman Catholicism an undeserved and unwarranted vote of confidence and even appreciation instead of sounding the warnings God's Word commands.

Key speakers also include Dr. E.V. Hill, pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist in Los Angeles and member of the NCC. He is a member of the Los Angeles NAACP, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (which sponsored the Gay Rights march on Washington in the summer of 1993), Los Angeles Urban League, and Billy Graham Association. He has been a guest speaker on various charismatic and new-evangelical platforms including Kenneth Hagin's Rhema Center. Another key speaker is Evangelist Louis Palau, internationally known as "the Billy Graham of South America". He cooperates with new-evangelicals, liberals, apostates, Roman Catholics, and charismatics (including the most radical fringe).

Since the ministry of PK teachers runs the gamut from compromising new-evangelicalism and charismatic error, to ecumenical liberalism, it is clear that they will be introducing their followers to unscriptural doctrines and fellowships. This is a very serious matter.

Promise Keepers is a charismatic led organization that was started by members of John Wimber's Vineyard Fellowship. It has been reported that these people have a tendency to infiltrate and split or take over existing churches. According to Roman Catholic Charismatic Magazine New Covenant, John Wimber is a "Protestant leader who is inspired by the Blessed Virgin." From the time it first started, Christian fundamentalists have considered Vineyard Fellowship to be a cult. Some of John Wimber's teachings are: Christians can be possessed by devils; inner healing: aura reading and manipulation: astral projection (out of body experiences); contact with familiar spirit; the Excluded Middle (a layer of reality which is not part of the Western World-view). A September 1994 Issue of Charisma magazine pointed out that John Wimber and his Vineyard churches have been swept up by the strange incidents of "holy laughter" or "laughing revivals" effecting thousands of churches throughout the world These are meetings where people (sometimes nearly everyone attending) fall to the floor ("slain in the Spirit"),

then they lie on the floor for long periods of time laughing hysterically (uncontrollably). Oral Roberts heralded the "laughing revivals" as an "arrival of another level in the Holy Spirit." Vineyard churches have been among the leading supporters of this movement which no one in the "Spirit-filled" community is aggressively opposing. We believe it is entirely possible that these are demons mocking God!

"Seven solid promises that will change a man's life forever." This is the bold claim printed on the back jacket of *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, published in 1994 by Focus on the Family and distributed in the USA and Canada by Word Books. It is the key to understanding what Promise Keepers is trying to do. These seven promises are not solidly based upon the sure foundation of God's Word alone, but upon a mixture of God's Word and the suppositions of men. The promises are for a man and his God, his mentors, his integrity, his family, his church, his brothers, and his world. They sound good on the surface, but when seen through the eyes of the contributing authors, they become dangerous. The major dangers of the PK movement include:

- Twisting, mis-applying, and mis-interpreting Scripture.
- Advocacy of unscriptural religious unity at the expense of sound doctrine and practice.
- Acceptance and promotion of unscriptural Charismatic teachings.
- Approval and use of psychological approaches and techniques.

Much of PK's success, humanly speaking, seems to be attributed to a few prominent individuals such as Bill Bright (Campus Crusade for Christ, whose staffs in Poland and Southern Ireland are mostly, if not all, Roman Catholic), and psychologists Dr. Gary Smalley and Dr. James Dobson (Focus on the Family) who have given their whole-hearted endorsement. Those who actually take the Promise Keepers program into the churches are called Point Men and Ambassadors. Point Men are the primary contacts with the churches that inform the congregations of upcoming conferences, training seminars and resources, and organize the promotion of PK conferences. Ambassadors introduce Promise Keepers to the churches in the community and recruit Point Men. A stated goal is to target men of all denominations and ethnic groups who desire to promote personal integrity and moral accountability. We've been told that another goal is to have a PK in every church! Many who have already joined this group are now bent on recruiting new members, with fully as much zeal and pressure, as sports-minded college alumni men seek to recruit top athletes for sports programs.

Are we who dare to criticize a movement such as Promise Keepers being nit-picky? Why not take advantage of the good in PK and ignore all the negatives? Does the end justify the means? The key men in PK are role models who habitually engage in compromise and violate Scriptural teaching. What message are they sending to their followers? They use pop psychology, rock music, and worldly entertainers. Men who may be reached through PK will not be steered into sound Bible churches. They will not be taught to separate from apostasy and heresy, nor will they be trained in discerning false gospels. They will be instructed in unscriptural ecumenism, taught that doctrine is not crucial, and that being militant for truth is unspiritual and unloving. They will be encouraged to accept even apostate denominations as genuine expressions of Christianity. For believers to participate in PK is compromise. No, to speak out is not nit-picky. It's essential!

Along with other Christian fundamentalists, we do not hesitate to give the strongest possible warning concerning the dangers of the Promise Keepers movement. The pressure to follow the crowd and silence the voice of scriptural reproof is growing. We believe there are many faithful pastors who, in the past have taken a stand against all ecumenical endeavors who are now being lured, even pressured into the Promise Keepers program. How can pastors deal with undoubtedly well-meaning, yet misled, men within their own churches who are now exerting pressure for them to fall into line with the program? Up until now pastors could herald a warning against Romanism, liberalism, ecumenism, the charismatic delusion, and the like without reservation. But now they have men within the flock who are introducing the people to all of these and more under the attractive packaging--Promise Keepers! "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."--Matt 7:15. "Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." --II Tim 4:2-4. "Speaking the truth in love. . ." - Eph 4:15.

Pray for Christian men, including pastors, to have the discernment and courage to expose this dangerous movement and to stand against it in defense of true Biblical faith and practice. These are indeed perilous times. We must stand fast and "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."--Jude 3.

--We have taken the liberty to use information extensively from *Foundation Magazine*, *O Timothy*, *The Christian News*, and *The Perilous Times* as a basis for this article. Please take the time to read what these publications have put out on this important subject.