

BALANCED LOVE: A REVIEW OF THE BOOK CRAZY LOVE, BY FRANCIS CHAN¹

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Drenched in Hype

“Waking up the sleeping church!” “Potent paradigm shift.” “A clarion call to ‘on-fire’ living for Christ!”—a sampling of glowing tributes found on online book sites about the book *Crazy Love*. A minority of comments stands in stark dissent: “Works-based theology!” “Mean-spirited.” “Confused.” “Unbiblical.”

Count me among the latter group, the disenchanting.

B. About the Author

Francis Chan is the senior pastor of Cornerstone Community Church of Simi Valley, California. He is a graduate of Master’s College and Seminary, both founded by and are presided over by John MacArthur. Chan also established a school himself called, “Eternity Bible College,” having the goal of making Bible education affordable. The college meets at the church and at satellite facilities. The church’s website contained a standard evangelical statement of faith. The school’s statement was more extensive, having strong Calvinist (TULIP) doctrines interwoven subtly.²

In addition to his duties as a pastor and college president, Francis Chan speaks regularly at conferences, particularly youth gatherings, nationwide. He also preached to millions as a guest on the *Hour of Power* program in February of 2009. Chan maintains a website with videos introducing each chapter of *Crazy Love*.³

II. STRENGTHS OF THE BOOK *CRAZY LOVE*

A. The Book’s Popularity

Since its release in May, 2008, the book *Crazy Love* has climbed the sales charts worldwide. As of October, 2009, *Crazy Love* stands in the number *two* ranking out of the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association’s Christian

¹ Francis Chan with Danae Yankoski, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2008), 187 pp.

² <http://www.eternitybiblecollege.com/about/sof.html>, pp. 1-4.

³ www.CrazyLoveBook.com

Bestsellers!⁴ It ranks ahead of such top-sellers as, *The Purpose Driven Life*, *90 Minutes in Heaven*, and perennial favorite, *My Utmost for His Highest*.⁵ An old saying goes, *Never argue with success!* However, I question such *wisdom* when referring to a book which may be proffering unsound doctrine.

B. Good Intentions

After reading *Crazy Love* and after viewing several of Francis Chan's sermons online, I believe that he is sincere in wanting Christians to experience *radical* living for God. Chan claims to model such a lifestyle: "We ended up moving into a house half the size of our previous home, and we haven't regretted it. My response to the cynics, in the context of eternity, was, am I the crazy one for selling my house? Or are *you* for not giving more, serving more, being with your Creator more?" (136) Chan is fond of using the word *crazy*. He employs it often in his writing and sermons. Usually, he means all-out devotion to God. On at least two occasions in the book he uses *crazy* to disparage his critics. It's as though he is sending out a warning to any who might dare to challenge his extreme theological stances. Chan even created a brief online video to stave off criticism called, *When You're Too Popular*.⁶ In it he quotes Luke 6:22; 23; 26 in saying that false prophets were praised while true prophets of God were scorned. "If I am really saying everything that God would have me to say, there will be plenty of people who are against me."⁷ As much as I may admire the author's apparent sincerity, good intentions, or convincing style, I nonetheless will always take content over delivery, substance over style, actual words over intentions. If the chief goal of the author in writing the book is to stimulate committed Christian living, who could argue with that? *But*, at what price? If the objective is accomplished by promoting a works-oriented "gospel" which destroys many Christian's assurance of salvation, has the cost been too great?

III. LORDSHIP SALVATION TAKEN TO AN EXTREME

A. Introductory Comments

There is no question that the book *Crazy Love* advocates a teaching called *Lordship Salvation*. I identify Francis Chan's variation as *extreme*, primarily because *Crazy Love* dwells heavily on condemnation to a severe level that I have not witnessed personally in the writings of other Lordship Salvation proponents, e.g., John MacArthur, John Piper, and J. I. Packer. It appears that in Chan's thinking, only a tiny minority of professing Christians will be counted

⁴ <http://www.ecpa.org/bestseller/index.php>, p. 1 (of 3).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁶ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ID1fPcT_x18

⁷ *Ibid.*

worthy to make it to heaven.

As the title *Crazy Love* suggests, Chan focuses overwhelmingly upon *obsessive* living for God (especially Chapter Eight, “Profile of the Obsessed”), apparently even to abandoning balance in areas of personal safety and financial security.

I found no allowances for what I call, *what about* situations: What about someone who *is* a believer but has fallen into sin? What about differences in background, personality, age or spiritual maturity? What about biblical cases of those who could be labeled *lukewarm*? Lot was a backslider his entire adult life, yet Peter calls him a righteous man in 2 Peter 2:7. Samson was a womanizer, David was a murderer—both are listed in the Hebrews 11 hall of faith. The Corinthian church was filled with worldly spiritual babes, much like the Laodicean church of Revelation 3. Yet Paul refers to them often as *brothers*. For these reasons, I call *Crazy Love extreme*.

B. Fostering a Culture of Uncertainty

As with all Lordship Salvation teaching, *Crazy Love* muddies the distinction between justification and sanctification, melding them together while distorting the simple message of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. The Lordship camp says that it’s not good enough to become saved by trusting Christ for salvation; one must also promise a lifetime of commitment to Christ, then follow through with that commitment or else be in danger of not making it to heaven one day. Charlie Bing calls it a *front-loading* of the gospel:

Well, the Lordship Salvation camp says that we should front-load the gospel and raise the ante. Let’s raise the standard so that we make sure that only those who are committed to going on can really become Christians to begin with, they would say. Is that the answer? Doesn’t that breed legalism and insecurity which never produces spiritual maturity and Christlikeness?⁸

Chan unknowingly answers Bing’s question. In *Crazy Love*, he tells of many people from his congregation asking him questions like, “If I divorce my wife can I still go to heaven?” “Do I have to be baptized to be saved?” “If I commit suicide, can I still go to heaven?” (86) It seems that Chan’s application of Lordship Salvation teaching to his own church has created such questioning doubts among his people. Blogger, *Dave*, responds to these quotations above:

It is my opinion that the reason many people ask whether they can divorce and still go to heaven and so on is all due to a works-oriented gospel out there. Instead of grace teaching a person to deny all manner of unrighteousness, the church uses fear and hell instead and then their version of grace to add the cherry on top. The reasons for those type of questions has to do with the confusion that is out there today. Francis Chan should note

⁸ Charlie Bing, “Why Lordship Faith Misses the Mark for Discipleship,” *JOTGES* (Autumn 1999), p. 1.

that most Lordship people I know ask such questions as they live under the weight of guilt and not those that are free grace and have a KNOW-SO assurance. . . . To me it is obvious that the god of LS is nothing more than a god that expects A's instead of B's.

Their

god is nothing more than a god of conditional love based on good behavior. It should be no

wonder that these law bound, guilt suffering people will be asking such questions as what Francis Chan shared.⁹

C. *Crazy Love* Quotations

In the quotations below, Chan utilizes elements of two Scripture-bending erroneous lines of argumentation: the *obvious fallacy* and *straw-man* sophistry. James Sire describes the first:

Interpretations of some biblical texts require great study. Even then, honest scholars are uncertain and disagree with each other. Yet we frequently find cult writers [I am not accusing Chan of being a cult writer] drawing conclusions with great ease and expecting us to follow their lead. The impression the interpreter wants to give is that the case is closed. His view is *the obvious one* [emphasis added].¹⁰

Charles Ryrie defines *straw man*: “a weak or imaginary opposition (as an argument or adversary) set up only to be easily confuted.”¹¹ He adds,

Realize that a straw man usually is not a total fabrication; it usually contains some truth, but truth that is exaggerated or distorted or incomplete. The truth element in a straw man makes it more difficult to argue against, while the distortion or incompleteness makes it easier to huff and puff and blow the man down.¹²

Sample quotations from *Crazy Love* with my responses:

1. “My conclusion? Jesus’ call to commitment is clear: He wants all or nothing. The thought of a person calling himself a ‘Christian’ without being a devoted follower of Christ is absurd.” (85)

Response: Chan makes an interpretation based, by his own admission, upon a superficial childlike reading of the gospels. He cites no specific Scripture whatsoever. To which gospel is he referring? It’s doubtful that he spent much time in John, for it says repeatedly that eternal life comes through believing in Christ alone for salvation: John 3:16-18; 36; 5:24; 6:28-29; 37; 40; 7:38; 10:9; 11:25-26; 14:6; 17:3. Chan must have targeted

⁹ <http://expreacher.com/2009/02/24/macarthur-type-new-apostacy/>, April 2, 2009, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰ James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways Cults Misread the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p. 99.

¹¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What it Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 27.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

discipleship passages, spoken primarily to the apostles and intimate disciples, most of whom were *already* believers! Jesus warned of troubles they would face as his followers. Indeed, all of the eleven apostles, following Judas Iscariot's exit, would one day experience torture and/or martyrdom. Again, without biblical reference, Chan, using the *obvious* argument, declares, "Jesus call to commitment is clear: he wants all or nothing." (85) He bolsters his contention by slamming and caricaturizing the opposing position of believing in Christ alone for salvation: "The thought of a person calling himself a 'Christian' without being a devoted follower of Christ is absurd." (85) Chan would be hard-pressed to contort the verses cited from John, or Acts 16:30-31, Rom. 4:5, Eph. 2:8-9 and Titus 3:5 to prove his *commitment* salvation.

2. "Jesus said, 'If you love me, you will obey what I command' (John 14:15). And our question quickly becomes even more unthinkable: *Can I go to heaven without truly and faithfully loving Jesus?* I don't see anywhere in Scripture how the answer to that question could be yes." (86)

Response: In context, his crucifixion looming, Jesus was comforting and guiding his closest disciples, who were *already believers!* [Judas had already apostatized.] This verse was *not* a call to salvation or perseverance. Robert Wilkin comments:

The concept of obeying God's commands does occur in John's gospel using other terms (for example, John 14:15, "If you love me, *keep* My commandments"; see also 15:14). However, none of those are connected with obtaining eternal salvation or of guaranteed perseverance. There is no promise in John that those who believe in Christ will persevere in good works. In fact, there are warnings that they might not (John 15:6).¹³

Keep [NIV—*obey*], in John 14:15, *tereo*, means essentially, *keeping guard over, keeping watch over, guarding, or preserving*.¹⁴ The word *If, ean* in Greek, often in the New Testament as *whoever* or *whomever*.¹⁵ To get a sense of what Jesus meant by *what I command*, we must examine the immediately-preceding context. John 13:35 declares, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."¹⁶ John 14:1 enjoins, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."¹⁷ Following Philip's plea for Jesus to show them the

¹³ Robert N. Wilkin, *Confident in Christ: Living by Faith Really Works* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), p. 271.

¹⁴ Robert L. Thomas, General Editor, *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1981), p. 1687.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1644.

¹⁶ *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, (New York: New York International Bible Society, 1978), John 13:35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, John 14:1.

Father, Jesus charges the disciples in 14:11, “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”¹⁸ Preceding John 14:15, Jesus promises the disciples: “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.”¹⁹

Summarizing, I might paraphrase John 14:15: “Whoever loves me will keep guard over my commands to love each other, to trust the Father and me so your hearts won’t be troubled, and to believe confidently in who I am, the Son of the living God.” In a nutshell: love, trust, and believe!

3. “Some people claim that we can be Christians without necessarily becoming disciples. I wonder, then, why the last thing Jesus told us was to go into all the world, making *disciples* of all nations, teaching them to *obey all* that He commanded? You’ll notice that He *didn’t* add, ‘But hey, if that’s too much to ask, tell them to just become Christians—you know, the people who get to go to heaven without having to commit to anything’ [emphasis Chan’s].” (87)

Response: Chan misquotes Matthew 28:19-20 [incomplete quotation] from the NIV without citation. He says this was the last thing Jesus told us; actually Jesus’ final words are recorded in Acts 1:8. Chan sardonically constructs a straw man, then razes it. Without legitimizing his mocking mischaracterization of the Free-Grace position, I’ve never heard anyone else define Christianity that way. *Of course* a person must commit to something when becoming a Christian; that *something* is actually a *someone*, namely Jesus Christ. When the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30-31 came trembling from an earthquake to Paul and Silas, “He then brought them out and asked, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They replied, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.’”²⁰ Chan amalgamates the gospel message of salvation by Faith in Christ alone with issues of discipleship and commitment, which creates a complicated mess planting unreasonable demands upon the unsaved. Bing remarks:

The Lordship Salvation view of discipleship assumes a Christian response from unbelievers. But what would an unbeliever understand about carrying his cross? What would an unbeliever understand about loving God with all his heart? He doesn’t know God. Would we expect an unbeliever to give up all his possessions or be willing to? What kind of logic is it that demands an unbeliever such sophisticated, mature Christian decisions that I am still grappling with in my own life? It just doesn’t make sense to expect from someone who is dead in sin, to expect from

¹⁸ Ibid., John 14:11.

¹⁹ Ibid., John 14:13-14.

²⁰ Ibid., Acts 16:30-31.

someone whose mind has been veiled by Satan himself, to respond to God with a fully loving heart at the moment of salvation, to respond to God in total commitment and total submission, to be willing to suffer for Him.²¹

Matthew 28:19-20 reads, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”²² *Therefore go* can indicate *going* or *while going*. *Disciple, mathetes*, means *learner*, as a rabbi’s student. Jesus had disciples—intimate and broader groups; John the Baptist also had disciples. Ryrie explains:

The Great Commission recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 commands us to make disciples. This involves two activities—baptizing and teaching. Baptizing is a single act; teaching is a continuous process. Disciples have to be baptized (an evidence of salvation—therefore, one may say that disciples must first be saved); then they have to be taught over and over to obey (observe all things). In New Testament times, baptism served as one of the clearest proofs that a person had accepted Christ. Baptism was not entered into casually or routinely as is often the case today. Although it is clear in the New Testament that baptism does not save, to be baptized was to signify in no uncertain terms that one had received Christ and was also associating himself with the Christian group, the church. . . . normally, a baptized person was a saved person; and a saved person was a baptized person. This is why our Lord’s Great Commission can use “baptism” as equivalent to “salvation.”²³

Proper order of discipleship: First, lead people to salvation through faith in Christ alone; second, baptize them as an outward evidence of their eternal salvation; third, teach them the Bible and how to grow in their faith (sanctification). I find it significant that Chan failed to quote Jesus’ words in Matt. 28:19-20, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” yet Chan *does* include the part about *obeying* everything Jesus commanded. This striking omission eliminates the gospel message of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, intrinsic to the call to baptize [see Ryrie above]. Furthermore, it implies that salvation comes through obedience to God’s commands, in spite of Romans 3:20!

C. Origin of Chan’s Extreme Teachings

Online magazine *Today’s Christian* explains the genesis of Chan’s radical beliefs:

In 2002, a trip to Uganda changed Chan forever. There he saw real poverty, and it became

²¹ Charlie Bing, “Why Lordship Faith Misses the Mark for Discipleship,” pp. 5-6.

²² *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Matthew 28:19-20.

²³ Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, pp. 93-94.

personal. Little girls the age of his daughters rooted through dumpsters for food. Chan began to ask himself, *What does it look like to love my neighbor as myself?* His answer was to move his family of four out of their 2,000-square-foot house into one half that size so they could give more to missions. “I couldn’t reconcile how I could live in such a nice house while others were starving,” Chan says. But while he was beginning to respond to God’s difficult calls in his personal life, Chan wasn’t sure he could do whatever God demanded of him as the leader of his church. So in May 2006, he announced his plans to resign as Cornerstone’s pastor. He wasn’t sure he’d ever return.²⁴

Francis Chan returned to Cornerstone on October 8, 2006, preaching a sermon entitled, *Lukewarm and Loving It* (YouTube). In it, he expressed that he had experienced doubts of his own salvation when he left the church.²⁵ Much of *Crazy Love* appears to emanate from that sermon. The sermon is an excoriating condemnation of Chan’s congregation and of evangelical Christianity today. Combining his interpretations of the rich ruler in Luke 18 with the *spitting out* of the lukewarm Laodicean church of Revelation 3 (more on this later) he says, “We are so weird. We are so filthy, filthy, filthy rich. And yet, most of you think you’re not.”²⁶ Continuing, “It’s not gonna be easy; it’s not gonna be probable; but, by the power of God, *some of you could* go to heaven. I have this haunting fear that some of you here at Cornerstone Church, possibly *many, many of you* are going to hell. It keeps me up at night.”²⁷ Cornerstone’s reaction a week later: Chan preached a follow-up sermon *Slavery Can Be Fun* (YouTube).²⁸ In it he said, “People keep asking our pastors, ‘What should I do?’ You know, I had people say, ‘It was like you stuck a dagger in my gut and I was like aw’ you’re absolutely right’; that is, the more I heard it, I said, Wow, this is so cool. This is exactly the way the church is supposed to respond.”²⁹ Chan shares more responses, “‘I will do anything!’ People are just going, ‘Whatever, whatever, whatever!’”³⁰ Pretty sad, it is, to see Christians living in such bondage and insecurity!

D. *Crazy Love*’s Characterization and Demolition of the Lukewarm

In Chapter 4, *Profile of the Lukewarm*, Chan concocts descriptions of what he considers to be lukewarm churchgoers. Here is a sampling (Bible quotations

²⁴ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/tc/peopleoffaith/profiles/francischanscrazylove.html?start=2> (Jennifer Schuchmann, “Francis Chan’s Crazy Love: Why this pastor’s church gives away half its budget,” *Christianity Today’s Online Version, Today’s Christian, September/October, 2008*), p. 1.

²⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBhqrtMqrv8> (Sermon, “Lukewarm and Loving It,” placed on YouTube October 14, 2006; 40 minutes in length).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mG7EStr8s3I> (Sermon, “Slavery Can Be Fun,” placed on YouTube October 17, 2006; 47 minutes in length).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

are not included):

- LUKEWARM PEOPLE attend church fairly regularly. It is what is expected of them, what they believe “good Christians” do, so they go. (68)
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE are moved by stories about people who do radical things for Christ, yet they do not act. They assume such action is for “extreme” Christians, not average ones. Lukewarm people call “radical” what Jesus expected of all His followers. (70-71)
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE rarely share their faith with their neighbors, coworkers, or friends. They do not want to be rejected, nor do they want to make people uncomfortable by talking about private issues like religion. (71)
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE say they love Jesus, and He is, indeed, a part of their lives. But only a part. They give Him a section of their time, their money, and their thoughts, but He isn’t allowed to control their lives. (72)
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE are continually concerned with playing it safe; they are slaves to the god of control. This focus on safe living keeps them from sacrificing and risking for God. (77)

After creating his list of the lukewarm, Chan chops them down like matchsticks in Chapter Five, *Serving Leftovers to a Holy God*. Listen to his striking words of condemnation: “As I see it, a lukewarm Christian is an oxymoron; there’s no such thing. To put it plainly, churchgoers who are ‘lukewarm’ are not Christians. We will not see them in heaven.” (84) Think about the drastic implications of Chan’s statement. He has just said, in effect, if you are not in that possibly two or three percent of *superchristians*, then you simply are not going to heaven! What is his evidence for lashing out with such acrimony? It stems from his perception of the passage about the Laodicean church of Revelation 3. Listen to Chan’s interpretation of Revelation 3:15-18. To be fair to him, and because his view of this passage is the linchpin of much of his argumentation in *Crazy Love*, I am quoting his discussion in its entirety:

This passage is where our modern understanding of *lukewarm* comes from. Jesus is saying to the church that because they are lukewarm, He is going to spit them out of His mouth. There is no gentle rendering of the word *spit* in Greek. This is the only time it is used in the New Testament, and it connotes gagging, hurling, retching.

Many

people read this passage and assume Jesus is speaking to saved people. Why? When you read this passage, do you naturally conclude that to be “spit” out of Jesus’ mouth means you’re a part of His kingdom? When you read the words “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked,” do you think that He’s describing saints? When He counsels them to “buy white clothes to wear” in order to cover their “shameful nakedness,” does it sound like advice for those already saved? I thought people who were saved were already made white and clothed by Christ’s blood. (84-85)

E. Responding to Chan’s View of the Lukewarm of Rev. 3:14-22

Let’s examine the text in greater detail.

1. The Laodicean Church: A Body of Believers

My strong contention is that the Church in Laodicea was a Christian church made up mostly of true believers in Christ with some unbelievers in the mix, much as any large Christian church today. Many clues within the text support this position. It is *vital* to make this distinction from Chan's view that the *entire* Laodicean church was comprised of unbelievers. Why is this differentiation so crucial? Because Chan builds his case of condemning *the lukewarm* primarily from his view of this passage and applies it to the Christian church of today. The repercussion? There's hardly a believer *left!*

2. Evidences of a Believer-based Church in Laodicea

(A.) *What is the Church?* The letter is addressed to a *church*, *ekklesia* in Greek. It is one of the seven *churches* in Revelation to which Christ addressed his words of commendation and admonition. A church, throughout the New Testament is a body of believers in Christ, namely, *Christians*. The church is called *the body of Christ*, Col. 1:18,24. Christ is also the Savior and head of the church—Eph. 5:23. Christ *loves* the church and gave himself up for her—Eph. 5:25. Chan's own school website affirms: "We believe the Church, which is the Body and espoused Bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons of this present age".³¹

The church is built on the solid bedrock foundation of Christ. Matt. 16:18 reads, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."³² Peter is the small stone—*Petros*; but the church is built on Christ, *this rock*, the contrasting *petra*, an enormous rock or bedrock. Picture the difference between a little pebble and Half Dome at Yosemite!

(B.) *Traditional view of "lukewarm":* *Lukewarm*, *chliaros*, has no other usage in the New Testament. We must look at other clues to explain it. Rudwick and Green define the standard opinion, although they hold to a somewhat different view: "Most other commentators, both patristic and modern, have taken 'lukewarmness' to denote a compromise between the fervent 'heat' of a believer, and the indifferent 'cold' of an unbeliever. Thus the *chliaros* (lukewarm man) is the Christian who lacks

³¹ <http://www.eternitybiblecollege.com/about/sof.html>, p. 3.

³² *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Mat. 16:18.

zeal.”³³

(C.) *Modified view: Cold, psuchros*, has only one other usage in this form in the New Testament, Matt. 10:42 “And if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.”³⁴

Hot, zestos, means *boiling hot or hot*.³⁵ Lukewarm water was the normal drinking fare of Laodicea, “which [having] no local water supply, had developed a stone aqueduct system to bring water from the hot springs of Hierapolis some six miles away. By the time this water reached Laodicea, however, it was tepid and distasteful.”³⁶ “At Hierapolis the hot spring water was much prized for its healing properties, and the extensive and opulent remains of the city show the breadth of its popularity and appeal.”³⁷

Colossae, ten miles away, had an abundant supply of cold fresh water. Rudwick and Green hold that *cold*, used in Rev. 3, cannot refer to the spiritual coldness or deadness of an unbeliever because, “It implies that even the apathy of a pagan is preferable in God’s sight to the half-heartedness of a Christian, a doctrine that would be difficult to defend from other passages of Scripture. Moreover, the application of the adjectives ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ to spiritual temperature, though natural to us, appears to be almost entirely foreign to the Ancient World.”³⁸ Matt. 10:42 bolsters the view that the word *cold* must refer to the notion of refreshment, as in a cup of cold water, undoubtedly a most welcome sight in the arid Middle East. Summarizing, it appears that the Laodicean church, although comprised primarily of believers, had become complacent about its faith, more interested in making money than nourishing lives. “It was providing neither refreshment for the spiritually weary, nor healing for the spiritually sick.”³⁹

(D.) *About to spit you out*: The key word here is *about [to], mello*. It warns the Laodicean church to return to fellowship and service to God. It should not be seen as

³³ M. J. S. Rudwick and E. M. B. Green, “The Laodicean Lukewarmness,” *The Expository Times* 1958; 69:176 (<http://www.sagepublications.com>).

³⁴ *The Holy Bible, New International Version*, Mat. 10:42.

³⁵ Robert L. Thomas, General Editor, *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, p. 1654.

³⁶ Earl F. Palmer, *The Communicator’s Commentary: 1, 2, 3 John, Revelation*, General Editor, Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), p. 152.

³⁷ M. J. S. Rudwick and E. M. B. Green, “The Laodicean Lukewarmness,” p. 177.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

an immediate threat, rather as God's loving call! It should *especially not* be viewed as a threat of losing one's salvation or of never having been saved. Referring to *mello*, Marshall says, "As so often (see also ch. 1. 19, 2. 10), this verb does not necessarily connote imminence, but only simple futurity."⁴⁰ In fact two other uses of the term in Rev. 1:19 and 3:10, from John's vantage point, speak of the far-distant future—the end times!

(E.) *Wretched, pitiful*: meaning, *distressed, miserable, suffering hardship*⁴¹—these are all conditions that the people brought upon themselves through complacency.

(F.) *Poor, blind, naked*: The Laodiceans were poor and blind, clouded in thinking, interested in making a buck, failing to embrace the riches of spiritual blessings that Christ already lavished upon them when they became believers (see Eph. 1:7-8). *Naked* can mean, *without clothing, lightly clad, without an outer garment, or without proper clothing*.⁴² Rev. 3:18 entreats them to live befitting the spiritual heritage that they already possessed in Christ, looking forward to heaven one day. They're called to heal their myopia and clothe the "nakedness" of self-assuredness. The phrase *buy from me gold refined in the fire* beckons enjoying the delights of relationship with God, referring to Isa. 55:1. In Rev. 3:4 Christ promises that one day in glory believers will walk with him, dressed in white.

(G.) *Rev. 3:19* refers unmistakably to believers: *Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline*. Hebrews 12:6 calls those disciplined by God *sons*, clearly, *believers*. Jesus calls the Laodicean church to repent, *not for salvation*, but for believers to get right with God, returning to blessing and fellowship with him.

(H.) *Rev. 3:20* gives an open invitation to return to a place of restored blessing, of communion. Jesus' promise to dine with them is a rich Middle Eastern metaphor for having intimate fellowship with them.

⁴⁰ Alfred Marshall, *The New International Version Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 967.

⁴¹ Robert L. Thomas, General Editor, *New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, pp. 1686; 1647.

⁴² James Orr, General Editor, "Entry for 'NAKED; NAKEDNESS'," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1915, <<http://www.studylight.org/enc/isb/view.cgi?number=T6257>>.

(l.) *To him who overcomes* in 3:21 is a common phrase in John's writings meaning, in every case, a *true believer!*

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper was written in rebuttal to the book *Crazy Love*. Its approach was to examine its teachings providing an exegetically-sound biblical response. I bear no animosity toward Francis Chan. I do not know him personally. What I know of him comes entirely from reading his book and from watching some sermons. I'm sure that he views his convictions as correct. He obviously wants people to experience closer relationship with God. But has he really examined carefully all the Scriptures pertaining to his viewpoints?

Words have meaning and impact! Words can edify or harm. When the book *Crazy Love* through, in my opinion, poor exegesis, consigns Christians by the busload to hell—"To put it plainly, churchgoers who are 'lukewarm' are not Christians. We will not see them in heaven" (83-84), isn't there bound to be fallout? *Crazy Love* is currently a Christian best-seller. Its impact is destined to be substantial! Most, I fear, will have no understanding of the broad theological implications of the book as outlined in this paper. My greatest apprehension is the potential for wholesale devastation of Christians' assurance of salvation.

END

