Friends, including minister Terry Fox, say Thomas Etheredge told them that the park was a “good investment” — even as he was borrowing to make payroll.

Thomas Etheredge borrowed $25,000 in February to meet his Wild West World payroll, a month after transferring the last of $410,000 to the park from its parent corporation, Restoration Farms.

At the same time, he was urging his friends at Summit Church to invest their money into the financially strapped amusement park, calling it a “good investment.”

Why several Summit members — including the church’s pastor, Terry Fox — decided to invest $50,000 to $300,000 last winter in the financially troubled park is one focus of an investigation launched July 11 by the Kansas Securities Commissioner’s office.

It’s also a question on the mind of at least one investor. “I think that Thomas really took advantage of his
wild west
from page 1a

friendships within our church,” said Valley Center accountant Mike Porter, who gave Etheredge $100,000. “And he absolutely abused his friendship with Terry Fox.”

Risk disclosure

Fox said he didn’t know the park was having trouble meeting its payroll of about 30 people last winter when he gave Etheredge $50,000.

“I just knew it was struggling,” Fox said. “Thomas said he needed money to keep going, to finish the park.”

So Fox said he handed over $50,000 from his retirement fund sometime in the first half of January. He has no documentation of the transaction.

“He (Etheredge) said it was a good investment,” Fox said. “He was never open to me about his personal business at that time, but that was OK. I didn’t really want to be involved, anyway.”

Investing wasn’t a tough decision, Fox said. Etheredge was a friend and other Summit Church members were investing as well.

Porter agreed, saying the participation of several Wichita-area banks, Park City and the South Central Kansas Economic Development District influenced his decision to give Etheredge $100,000.

“I mean, you see those people investing and it gives you confidence,” Fox said.

“We never met as a church or anything and discussed whether the park was a good investment. Maybe we should have.”

The investments came as Wild West World’s parent company, Restoration Farms, was shoveling money into the park.

Almost $410,000 was paid from Restoration Farms to Wild West World from Dec. 19, 2006, through Jan. 10, 2007, according to court documents in the Restoration Farms bankruptcy filing.

Risk disclosure — whether the park’s investors were apprised of its financial condition before they invested — is one issue before state securities investigators.

University of Kansas law professor Webb Hecker said investors like Fox and Porter will wield a lot of influence in whether the state takes action.

Hecker said the state likely won’t proceed if investors aren’t upset about the loss of their money.

Etheredge attorney Steve Joseph acknowledged Thursday that the $25,000 loan in February to meet payroll is among the transactions his client has discussed with securities investigators. But Joseph said the deals were among friends.

“I’m confident they’re going to see that this is a bunch of friends who had to recognize that Thomas was having problems,” he said.

The loan

The payroll loan came Feb. 16 from New York attorney Holger Wrede, holder of the copyright to Hopalong Cassidy’s image, and Fred J. Bush Rentals.

Both have filed a claim in U.S. Bankruptcy Court against the park for $25,865.38, an “emergency loan to cover Wild West World payroll,” according to court documents.

Wrede had a longtime relationship with Etheredge, loaning him about half of the collection on display at the Hopalong Cassidy Museum on the grounds of the Prairie Rose Chuckwagon Supper in Benton.

Wrede’s loan came about a month after Fox gave Etheredge $50,000 “to help finish building the park.”

And it came at roughly the same time Porter plowed $100,000 into the park in a combination loan/investment, again to help finance its completion.

Porter said he knew vaguely that “money was tight” for Etheredge.

Etheredge was sending out pleas for patience to creditors in January, according to bankruptcy court records. One recipient was Pan Amusements, an Oldham, England, firm that sold him a six-gun Wild West shooting gallery.

In fact, the park was in financial trouble dating back to the fourth quarter of 2006, Joseph said.

One big reason, said former Wild West World marketing director Ryan Cole, wasn’t Etheredge’s penchant for largesse — spending six figures on a stagecoach and clock for the park while ignoring pleas from Cole for a marketing budget.

“The cash flow problem was obvious,” Porter said. “He was really pressuring the church for advance payments on the land we bought to build on.”

Summit Church was meeting in the Johnny Western Theatre on the Wild West World grounds. Church leaders had paid Etheredge $400,000 for a parcel of park land to build a permanent church.

Former Wild West World employees said they worked under a vague “overtone” of financial trouble.

“From the day I started working there,” Cole said, “he was always coming to me, applying the pressure, saying, ‘Sell something. I’ve got to have money.’”

The Wrede claim also includes a March 8 promissory note from Etheredge for $25,000 payable on June 30 and 100 percent interest — another $25,000 — payable on Aug. 30.

Also included in the filing is a March 8 check from Etheredge to Wrede and Bush Lumber Co. for $25,000, with an attached note asking the check not be cashed until June 30.

Wild West World closed July 9 and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection the same day. The check was never cashed.
The Rev. Terry Fox at the pulpit in the Johnny Western Theatre, where Summit Church was meeting. Fox and several other church members invested $50,000 to $300,000 in Wild West World.
About 40 Wichitans are appearing as extras in the movie ‘The Only Good Indian’

By Denise Neil
The Wichita Eagle

The dusty main street inside Old Cowtown Museum is crawling with people wearing headsets, and the grounds are packed with trucks and trailers. But everything is silent. People who walk must tiptoe. People who talk must whisper.

Then, suddenly, noise. “Quiet on the set!” bellows a voice out of nowhere. “Action on the bike! Roll camera!”

Around the corner zips actor Wes Studi of “The Last of the Mohicans” fame. He’s dressed in white from head to toe and is riding a motorized bike with a sidecar.

As he passes, women in billowy dresses and boys in straw hats cross the street. Studi jumps off the bike and runs.

“CUT!”

It’s Friday, day four of filming on “The Only Good Indian,” a drama about the American Indian boarding school experience set in the 1900s.

Part of the movie is being shot at Old Cowtown — a perfect Old West backdrop for filmmakers Kevin Willmott, a KU film professor, and his partner, television actor James McDaniel, best known as Lt. Arthur Fancy on “NYPD Blue.”

Studi stars in the independent film, but when it’s released sometime in late 2008 or early 2009, it’ll include other familiar faces.

Two weeks ago, filmmakers auditioned Wichitans to play extras. About 200 people showed up, hoping for a chance to appear as

Please see MOVIE, Page 4A

If you go
“BLOODY DAWN” FILMING

A separate movie, about William Quantrill’s raid on Lawrence during the Civil War, will be filmed at Old Cowtown Museum on Sunday. The public can watch from noon to 6 p.m. after paying the regular admission fee ($7.75 for adults; $5.50 for children ages 4 to 11). For more information, call 316-660-1871 or visit Cowtown’s Web site at www.oldcowtown.org.
Wardrobe designer Nancy Robinson, actor Wes Studi, center, and filmmaker Kevin Willmott work Friday, the fourth day of filming at Cowtown. The movie, set in the 1900s, is about the American Indian boarding school experience.

From Page 1A

townspopleor American Indian schoolchildren. About 40 were chosen.

On Friday, the extras — dressed in period-appropriate print dresses, brimmed hats and knickers — kept cool in an air-conditioned building while filming continued outside.

Some of the extras were Cowtown volunteers with years of re-enactment experience. Others were veterans of local theater groups. Still others were acting novices who'd decided to follow a whim when they auditioned.

The extras, who had arrived on set at 6:30 a.m. and expected to stay until after dark, passed the time chatting about their jobs and families and swapping stories about encounters with McDaniel, who was on the set.

But they all kept an eye on the door. Every few minutes, the casting director would burst in and summon groups of them onto the set, often demanding quick costume changes as they scurried out the door.

Among the chosen was J.T. Manuszak, a retiree who'd always wanted to work as a movie extra. He hadn't been called for many scenes yet, but he'd already learned quite a bit about moviemaking.

It's all about waiting, he said, describing a scene he'd witnessed in which two actors jumped off their horses and walked up a set of stairs into a building.

That one short scene took about an hour to film, Manuszak said, and the two actors jumped and walked at least 15 times.

"You can see how it takes two years to make a movie if it takes them an hour to get in a doorway," he said with a laugh.

Filming at Old Cowtown is set to continue through next week. The set is closed. Crews also will film scenes in Cottonwood Falls and northeast Kansas.

They hope to have filming completed by Labor Day.

Reach Denise Neil at 316-268-6327 or at dneil@wichitaeagle.com.

Wes Studi completes a scene for "The Only Good Indian" on Friday at Cowtown, where filming will continue through next week.
The top five

**BEST ANTIQUE STORE**
- B&J Antique Mall
- Wheatland Antiques
- Ferris Wheel Antiques
- Brickhouse Antiques
- The Cobweb

**BEST BIKE SHOP**
- Capp's Bike Shop
- Jerry's Bike Shop
- Harley Davidson Tailwind Cycling and Fitness
- Mike's Frame Shop

**BEST TIRE STORE**
- Goodyear Auto Service Centers
- Gregg Tire Performance Tire and Wheel
- Big O Tires
- Peerless Tire Co.

**BEST PATIO AND POOL STORE**
- Patio Pool & Fireside Swims and Sweeps
- Devader's Pools and Spas
- Four Seasons Family Pools and Spas (Lawrence)
- Lowe's

**BEST RE-SALE/SECOND-HAND STORE**
- Branded
- Goodwill
- Prairie Trading Co.
- Mommy & Me Fashion Exchange

**BEST BANK**
- Commerce Bank and Trust
- Kaw Valley State Bank and Trust Co.
- Capitol Federal Bank of America
- US Bank

**BEST CREDIT UNION**
- Kansas Super Chief Credit Union
- Educational Credit Union
- Credit Unions United/Rubber Workers Credit Union 1
- Community America

**BEST CHURCH/SYNAGOGUE**
- Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church
- Christ the King Catholic Church
- Grace Episcopal Cathedral
- St. Matthew's Catholic Church
- Mater Dei Catholic Church

**BEST HEARING AID SERVICE**
- Ediger Hearing Aid Service
- Professional Hearing Aid Associates
- Topeka Ear Nose and Throat (Beltone)
- Hearing Aid Center
- Midwest Hearing Aids

**BEST TANNING SALON**
- Sun-Tana
- Oasis Tanning
- Island Tan
- Sun Resorts
- TNT Tans

**BEST BARBERSHOP/BEAUTY SALON/SPA**
- Ego's Salon and Day Spa
- Body Paradise
- Blondie's Capelli Hair and Nail Salon
- Bella Salon and Day Spa

**BEST PLACE FOR A MANICURE**
- California Nail Body Paradise
- Bella Salon and Day Spa
- Elegant Nails
- Blondie's

**BEST CARPET CLEANER**
- Chavez Restoration and Cleaning
- Bob's Janitorial
- D&B Unlimited
- Stanley Steemer
- Gardner's Flooring America

**BEST AUTO MECHANIC**
- William Truck & Auto (Maple Hill)
- Goodyear Auto Service Centers
- Hogan Muffler & Brake
- Ford Quality Care
- Gregg Tire

**BEST HEATING AND AIR SERVICE**
- McElroy's Inc.
- Young's Inc.
- Blue Dot Services
- Lower Plumbing, Heating and Air-Conditioning Services
- A-1 Cooling

**BEST PLUMBER**
- Young's Inc.
- McElroy's Inc.
- Ace Plumbing and Sewer Services
- Blue Dot Services
- Pat the Plumber

**BEST CELL PHONE COMPANY/SERVICE**
-ingular AT&T
- Verizon
- Sprint
- T-Mobile
- Attel

**BEST LAUNDRY OR DRY CLEANER**
- Village Cleaners
- Hygienic Golden Touch Cleaners
- US Cleaners
- Ichabod Laundry Bar

**BEST CAR WASH**
- Eagle Auto Wash
- Spot Not Carwash
- Squeaky Clean Car Wash
- Bug Off
- Bob's

**BEST SCHOOL**
- Washburn Rural High School
- Seaman High School
- Hayden High School
- Shawnee Heights High School
- Topeka High School

**BEST TRAVEL AGENCY**
- AAA Travel
- Jade Travel
- Cruise Holidays
- Fun in the Sun
- Bryan Travel

**BEST HOME IMPROVEMENT/REMODELER**
- Lowe's
- Home Depot
- Dillard Construction
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The top five

**BEST FUNERAL HOME**
- Penwell-Gabel Funeral Homes
  - Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home
  - Mercer Funeral Home (Holt)
  - Newcomer Family Funeral Home
  - Davidson Funeral Home

**BEST CASINO**
- Prairie Band Casino and Resort (Mayetta)
- Sac and Fox Casino (Hoyt)
- Golden Eagle Casino (Horton)
- Ameristar (Kansas City, Mo.)
- Argosy (Riverside, Mo.)

**BEST CLUB FOR LIVE ENTERTAINMENT**
- Jull's Cocktail Club
- Jeremiah Bullfrogs
- Heart Attack Jacks
- Electric Cowboy
- Static Bar

**BEST PLACE FOR WEDDING RECEPTION**
- Prairie Band Casino and Resort
- Lake Shawnee
- Capitol Plaza Hotel
- Kansas Museum of History
- Gage Park

**BEST PLACE TO TAKE A DAY TRIP/SUNDAY DRIVE**
- Lake Shawnee
- Lawrence
- Prairie Band Casino and Resort

**BEST FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT**
- Gage Park
- Sonata 14/West Ridge Theaters
- Sports Center
- Gage Bowl

**BEST PLACE TO EXERCISE**
- Maximus Fitness and Wellness
- YMCA
- Curves for Women
- Jazzercize
- Wood valley Racquet Club

**BEST GOLF COURSE**
- Lake Shawnee
- Shawnee Country Club
- Topeka Country Club
- Western Hills
- Cypress Ridge

**BEST AREA LAKE/RESERVOIR/CAMPGROUND/RV PARK**
- Lake Shawnee
- Lake Perry (Perry)
- Clinton Lake (Lawrence)

**BEST MEDICAL DOCTOR**
- Jeff Rhoads, Rhoads Medical Clinic
- Michael Atwood, Cotton-O'Neill
- Douglas Iliff, Iliff Family Practice
- Michael Murphy, Cotton-O'Neill
- Josie Norris, Birth and Women's Center

**BEST INSURANCE AGENCY**
- State Farm Insurance
- American Family Insurance
- Shelter Insurance
- Farmers Insurance
- Farm Bureau Insurance

**BEST DENTIST/ORTHODONTIST**
- Drs. Hamilton and Wilson Orthodontics
- Robert Hall, Gage Dental
- Anthony Beckler
- Greg Johnson, Gage Dental
- Jeffery Burket, Gage Dental

**BEST PHOTO STUDIO/PHOTOGRAPHER**
- Nathan Ham Photography
- Nexus Photography
- Don Brent Photography
- Imaging
- Wichers Photography

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 12**
The top five

**BEST REAL ESTATE AGENT**
- Deb McFarland, Coldwell Banker Griffith and Blair American Home
- Vivian Kane, Capitol City Real Estate
- Branan's Inc. Real Estate and Auctions (Holton)
- Lori Means Miller, Helen Crow, Kirk and Cobb Inc. Realtors

**BEST LOCAL BAND**
- The Exceptions
- The Groove
- Simply Driven
- Western Fiction
- Other Brother

**BEST LOCAL RADIO PERSONALITY**
- John Lee Hooker, KMAJ
- Joey Baggs, V100
- Jim Cates, KMAJ, 1440-AM

**BEST LOCAL TV PERSONALITY (MALE)**
- Ralph Hipp, WIBW News
- Nate Hill, 27 News-KSNT
- Bruce Jones, 27 Weather-KSNT
- Rob Peppers, WIBW Weather
- Johnny Kane, 27 Sports-KSNT

**BEST LOCAL TV PERSONALITY (FEMALE)**
- Amy Lietz, 27 News-KSNT
- Melissa Brunner, WIBW News

**BEST LOCAL TV PERSONALITY (FEMALE)**
- Jiao Jiao Shen, 27 News-KSNT
- Rhiannon Ally, WIBW News
- Linda Russell, WIBW News

**BEST LOCAL Weather PERSONALITY**
- Bruce Jones, 27 Weather-KSNT
- Rob Peppers, WIBW Weather
- Tom Hagen, 27 Weather-KSNT
- Jeremy Goodwin, WIBW Weather
- Katy Morgan, 27 News-KSNT

**BEST ANNUAL TOPEKA EVENT**
- Fiesta Mexicana
- Spirit of Kansas
- Fourth of July
- Huff 'n' Puff Balloon Rally
- Cider Days
- St. Patrick's Day Parade

**BEST LOCAL CAR SHOW/CAR CLUB**
- Low Rider Club
- Fairlawn Plaza Cruise Nights

**BEST LOCAL ART GALLERY/MUSEUM**
- Kansas Museum of History
- Mulvane Art Museum
- Washburn University Phoenix Gallery
- Sabatini Gallery, Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library
- Brown v. Board National Historic Site

**BEST LOCAL CAR SHOW/CAR CLUB**
- Corvette Club
- Downtown Classic Car Show
- Country Stampede (Manhattan)
- Wakarusa Festival (Lawrence)
- Renaissance Festival (Bonner Springs)
- French Market (Holton)
- Maple Leaf Festival (Baldwin City)

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- Ralph Hipp, WIBW News
- Nate Hill, 27 News-KSNT
- Bruce Jones, 27 Weather-KSNT
- Rob Peppers, WIBW Weather
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- Fiesta Mexicana
- Spirit of Kansas
- Fourth of July
- Huff 'n' Puff Balloon Rally
- Cider Days
- St. Patrick's Day Parade
Difference between addiction, discipleship

They drink all night, they drink all day:
And the more they drink, the more they may.
Such liking they have of that drink
That of none other wine they think.
But only for to drink their fill
And to have of this drink all their will.

These words come from a 12th-century Carthusian monk named Guigo II. The lines describe Guigo’s feelings about the power and sweetness of God and the subsequent experience of those who have tasted God’s sweetness.

I recalled these lines as I read When Religion is an Addiction, a new book written by University of Kansas professor Robert Minor. However, from what I’ve been able to read of and about Minor’s book, I don’t think this is what Minor has in mind.

In the interest of fairness, Minor has focused on a particular group of religious believers he terms “the dominant religious/political right-wing fundamentalism.” According to Minor, “Like the family drunk, they are high on a bender, and their current drink is political.”

However, where I think Minor errs is in assuming there’s a necessary connection between what he calls “religious fundamentalism” and right-wing politics. Since I began writing this column, I’ve communicated with pastors and evangelical Christians who simply don’t meet Minor’s rather simplistic black and white portrayal.

During the last congressional elections, several evangelical ministers criticized the immigration position of Republican candidate Kris Kobach.

However, I think Minor would characterize me as an enabler for making such observations. My attempt at fairness and objectivity only worsen the problem. Though I confess I haven’t had the opportunity to read Minor’s book entirely, I think Minor’s thesis, though passionate, demonstrates the limitations of polemical political rhetoric.

In other words, part of the strength of the critique made by Minor is a major source of weakness as well. Why is Minor not trying to discover similar forms of addictive behavior on the part of liberals?

What would Minor have made of John Brown who in his 1859 trial made the following statement, “Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit; so let it be done!”

What does Minor think of individuals like Martin Luther King Jr., Archbishop Oscar Romero, Daniel Berrigan and others who found that their religious beliefs compelled them to seek political solutions to injustice?

Is Minor truly concerned with “religious addiction” or rather dismayed and disgusted by the politics of these so-called “addicts”?

I don’t deny the damage that’s been done in the name of God and religion in our world.

Nevertheless, for me, religion is a source of comfort, but it’s also a challenge and a struggle. Robert Minor calls this “addiction.” I call it discipleship.

Nicolas Shump is a doctoral student in American studies at The University of Kansas. He can be reached at Nicol225@sunflower.com.
University of Kansas develops system for issuing alerts

By The Associated Press

LAWRENCE — More than three months after a gunman killed more than 30 people at Virginia Tech, officials at the University of Kansas have begun testing a system to alert students and faculty to similar on-campus emergencies.

The new system allows police and fire officials to notify the university’s public safety dispatchers of potential emergencies and then relay an emergency message to one building or the entire campus.

"That’s pretty powerful," said Bob Rombach, the university’s fire marshal and architect for Design and Construction Management.

Rombach said officials at Virginia Tech had limited options in April when they tried to issue a campuswide alert between two series of shootings by a student.
New-moon meteor shower promises a great view

BY MARY CLARKIN
The Hutchinson News
mclarkin@hutchnews.com

The man in the moon will cede the limelight this weekend to some shooting stars.

A new moon Sunday is coinciding with the Perseids meteor shower, allowing an especially dark backdrop to showcase the sparks in the sky.

The meteor shower should be visible early Sunday, before sunrise around 6:42 a.m. People also should be able to see the shower Sunday night into Monday morning.

Don’t bother to grab the binoculars or set up the telescope, the advice from Bruce Twarog, professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Kansas.

They flash across the sky in a matter of a few seconds, he said, and by the time an individual could adjust binoculars, the shooting star would be gone.

“Don’t bother to grab the binoculars or set up a telescope,” Twarog said.

Shower

Continued from Page A1

“Just get a lawn chair or lay down on the ground and look up at the sky and just watch,” he recommended.

Heading to the country, away from the glow of city lights, is considered optimal for viewing, too.

Lake Afton Public Observatory, in Sedgwick County, is not planning to be open for public viewing Sunday night, and the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center, Hutchinson, is not presenting any program.

Every time an orbiting comet gets closer to the sun, the sun’s radiation causes the comet to break into smaller pieces, Twarog said.

Over time, the entire comet is destroyed and becomes a long debris stream. When the Earth’s orbit crosses that debris field every year at the same time, it is treated to a meteor shower, Twarog said.

Comet Swift-Tuttle is responsible for this weekend’s show, and Bill Cooke, of NASA’s Meteoroid Environment Office, was quoted as estimating one or two meteors per minute at the peak, zipping at more than 130,000 miles per hour.

“They all fall to Earth, but most of them never make it,” Twarog said.

The Aurigids will not be typical meteors, and researchers will send up equipment to gather data.

The show put on by the Aurigids will last about an hour and a half, making it much shorter and harder to observe than the Perseids shower.

Although the Perseids is generating extra excitement this year because of the new moon, the Cosmosphere’s public programs manager Katie Browns said another meteor shower, anticipated locally around 6:36 a.m. Sept. 1, is inspiring greater buzz in the science community.

That’s when debris from the Comet Kiess will cause a meteor shower, and those meteors – called the Aurigids because they will radiate from the constellation Auriga – will represent a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They won’t return for perhaps a thousand years.

“For every astronomer that’s out there now, this will be their only shot,” she said.
KU professor takes aim at ‘religious addiction’

BY TERRY ROMBECK
The Associated Press

LAWRENCE – More than anything, Robert Minor views his new book as cultural commentary. But he hopes it serves another role.

“It’s sort of like an intervention,” he says.

The Kansas University professor’s eighth book, “When Religion Is an Addiction,” may become his most controversial. He suggests that some members of the religious right have become so addicted to their church activities that they have to continue advancing their causes to get new “highs.”

“It’s like any addiction,” he says. “At some point, it doesn’t do the trick for you, so you need to strengthen it. Religion wasn’t enough for them, so they entered politics to get a stronger affirmation of righteousness.”

Before any liberals think they’re off the hook, Minor, has a message for them: “I’m not really writing it to convince people they’re addicted to religion. It’s more written for people who are liberals, who are enablers.”

Minor is expecting to rile people on all sides of the political spectrum.

Minor has been a professor of religious studies at KU since 1977. His areas of study and teaching include religions of south Asia, sexuality and religion and gender.

His previous books include “Scared Straight” and “Gay and Healthy in a Sick Society.” He says he’s been thinking about the concept of religious addiction for years, and he admits it’s not a new concept. Religious scholars and authors such as John Bradshaw and Leo Booth have written about it before.

But Minor hopes to cast it in terms of the rise of the religious right in the past 20 to 30 years.

He says the high of advancing beliefs through political activism has replaced the highs of church activity.

“Like the family drunk,” he writes in the book’s introduction, “they are high on a bend, and their current drink is political.”

The addiction can manifest itself in other ways, Minor says, including “winning a political battle, doing political work, feeling like you’re doing the work of the Lord ... more Bible readings, more studies, more testimonials.”

He gives the example of gay unions and marriage as an issue. Passing the federal Marriage Protection Act wasn’t enough, he says. Conservatives then decided to work for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, or work so gays can’t adopt children.

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―The fix never lasts, so you need another issue," he said. Minor doesn't profess to be a psychologist, so he doesn't know the exact cause of the religious addiction. But he thinks it is connected to low self-esteem issues, because some fundamental Christians believe they "deserve eternal child abuse from a heavenly father," and that "you can only be OK if somebody else (God) likes you," he says.

And, he says, the media has helped further the right-wing cause. He notes a study by the watchdog group Media Matters of America that said right-wing religious leaders were interviewed, quoted or mentioned 3.8 times as often as other religious issues.

Minor blames liberals for enabling conservatives in their religious and political changes through the years.

Though the concept of religious addiction has been around for decades, it's "safe to say that field is still in its infancy" in terms of scientific and clinical research, says Steve Ilardi, a KU associate professor of psychology. Ilardi says chemical or substance addictions tend to activate the same reward pathways of the brain that "process addictions"—such as gambling or binge eating—also activate.

But, Ilardi says, there is "enormous controversy in the literature right now" when it comes to determining what qualifies as a process addiction, which is the area where Minor's idea of religious addiction would fit.

The big factor clinically speaking, Ilardi says, is whether there's harm in religious involvement.

"Religious addiction"—what does that mean? he asks. "Does it mean a person who spends hours a week in religious practice at church or at meetings, who reads the Bible daily or prays daily, and it's somewhat rewarding to them? Are they addicted? From a clinical perspective, I would say no, unless it's something that's clearly harmful."

That would include neglecting other relationships, work or other life responsibilities, Ilardi says.

"Is it impairing a person's functioning?" Ilardi asks. "That's the question I would want to see addressed before I'd consider labeling something a religious addiction."

Shaun LePage, pastor at Community Bible Church, 906 N. 1464 Road, is among those questioning Minor's logic.

"The book is just another in our psychobabble-hungry culture to declare something an 'addiction,'" LePage says. "If it was sarcasm or parody, it might be funny. But I think Dr. Minor is completely serious."

Bill Bump, pastor at Lawrence Free Methodist Church, 3001 Lawrence Ave., says he doesn't consider himself part of the "Christian right." But, after reading the online version of Minor's book, he says he feels uncomfortable with the broad generalizations Minor makes.

"I think he's writing from his perspective, which is fine," Bump says. "But it's not a book I would read or recommend. I think he paints people with too broad a stroke, talking about their personality. I can't say everybody has the same psychology, whether they're Democrats, Republicans, liberal or conservative."