

"... Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"

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WHAT WE MAY LEARN FROM THE CULTS

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

It may appear paradoxical for some of you that this writer selected the subject at the masthead of this article in *The Discerner*. For over forty years, our agency has vigorously combated the activities of these off-center or spurious groups. We have continually exposed their error in dealing with Scriptural truth. It has been achieved mainly through the publication of informative literature. This includes books and pamphlets which expose these many false teachings. Without a doubt, we have the most carefully selected material which is available to the public in our country. Generally, this material may be purchased at modest cost in our office. We also publish regularly our magazine, *The Discerner*. It serves as a means of public enlightenment, and, through the telephone, and by means of correspondence and counseling, we are able to help those people who need up-to-date information on the various cultic groups. Thousands of people have benefited by our timely publications. This literature is of very special help to those who are unable to discriminate between the position held by the cults versus those among the Bible-believing groups. Communications from many reach our office indicating how much our literature has been ap-

preciated, and the information, also, through material ordered from us.

Let me now turn to our message under the above title. It provides some pertinent information on vital matters to people who may not understand the cults adequately.

We May Learn Something About The Intensity Of The Committal Of The Cultists To Their Work

I am convinced that all the readers will profit by knowing how the cults carry on their activities. Often they manifest an aggressiveness above that of the Bible-believing people. Christ made a significant statement in the following words: "The children of the world (the non-Christians) are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Lu. 16:8). Our opponents seem to achieve their objectives more skillfully than the children of light, who have a much more worthy goal. We may learn from the cults that a total committal to a cause is all-important. The non-spiritual people often have a superior ambition in achieving their goals. This is surely the lesson that our Lord teaches us in the passage cited. For example, we have seen how the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons go from door-to-door calling on people in a

systematic manner, seeking new followers to their cause. Within a few days they will have covered a big area with their mission. Frequently, the emissaries of the cults get rebuffed by people whom they try to visit. Often doors are slammed shut in their faces and they are harshly treated. Somehow they take this without much complaint, as it appears, and continue in canvassing the area. Usually they work two-and-two in order to maintain courage and stamina in the work. Honesty compels us to admire their drive and commitment to the cause which they represent.

In sending out his workers, Jesus said, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves." While witnessing in certain areas of Chicago, I told our church that the mission was fruitful. Some people threw spoiled tomatoes and decaying fruit on us. Not all areas in America will accept graciously public witnessing, and those who ring doorbells. Seldom do Christian people manifest the persistence and willingness of the cultists in continuing this kind of ministry in witnessing. Obviously, our Lord did not imply that the non-Christian workers are wiser than God's children in an over-all comparison with the believing element. The fact is that the cultic representatives in their work will find it does not count for eternity. On the other hand, Christian witnesses are in a work which will provide real dividends for heaven and glory. It is only relative to this generation that the children of the world may be wiser. In other words, to this limited period some non-Christians may demonstrate a superior dedication to

tasks in which they may be involved. It is limited to the present period and has no merit for the eternal life which is promised to the children of light.

You may have heard the story of the church which had on its outside bulletin board the words in bold-faced letters, "This is the Gateway to Heaven—Church closed during the Summer." It is a common practice for certain churches in some areas to close their Sunday school, and other vital services, during the vacation period, or in the summer months; in Europe, we found it to be a standard practice. In the Scandinavian countries, churches which were open were very nearly empty of people during this period. I assume this was true in other areas of Europe also. The words of Jesus have become painfully true in this generation.

Sacrificial Giving By Cultists Is Often More Generous Than By The Children Of Light

During one year, the cult of Herbert W. Armstrong had an income of 55-million dollars. The Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon, after his imprisonment, took action in order for him to restore his church from lost confidence in the Movement. He appealed for millions of dollars in providing pastors and lay-leaders of the country with books and literature free, at a cost of 10-million dollars. I received literature which doubtlessly cost 50 dollars. He found no shortage in funds for this propaganda program. In recent years, the Mormon Church has built 24 costly temples in this country, two of which are more imposing than their famous temple in Utah. In all, throughout the world, it adds up to 28 temples which have

been built. As I was preparing this message, my wife handed me an announcement from the World Gospel Crusade that in the year 1987 The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints plans to send 25,000 young missionaries to Argentina. Evidently, that organization has enormous funds in order to carry out such a massive project.

Some years ago I heard the son of Ezra Taft Benson, following his two-year mission to Great Britain. He spoke in a big auditorium telling of the Mormon project. His father has been appointed to be the President of the Mormon Church, which is the largest cult today. It is a common practice that young Mormons give this time to their church. Relatives are expected to pay the cost of such services. The participants receive only their living expenses. One wonders what Protestant project today follows this sacrificial program in missionary enterprise. Not many in our time follow the example of David Brainerd, the pioneer missionary to the American Indians, more than two centuries ago. He was ill-equipped to meet the hardships in that day. He often labored for months in cold weather without adequate food and clothes. He contracted tuberculosis, and died at the age of 30. His life has been an inspiration to missionary-minded people ever since. Christianity has its heroes, but, unfortunately, the cults have a greater number in their misguided work both at home and abroad. We have solid information how the followers of Sun Myung Moon, mostly young people, go forth to gain new recruits for this cult, often lacking the means with which to buy food and get proper lodging, until their health is jeopardized, and

at times, their bodies become emaciated. They sleep on floors in buildings without having proper bedding. All this sacrifice is made for their multi-millionaire leader who lives in a palace of luxury.

In The Distribution Of Literature, The Cultists Have An Imposing Record Which Has Outdestined The Christian Church

A few years ago, the Jehovah's Witnesses, as an organized body, printed nearly 20-million copies of "*The Watchtower*" magazines, and also the one called "*Awake!*" This was done to expand their unprecedented program of distribution of literature. My first contact with cultic literature and propaganda was at the age of 10, when a Christian Science representative, a middle-aged woman, came to my parental home. It was by horse and buggy, the common mode of transportation then. Practically no automobiles were visible in that time. She gave an inspirational talk on Christian Science and what it was achieving for people. My parents were wise enough not to accept her message but she did have literature to present. She was a well-trained cultic sales-woman. Fifteen years later, at age 25, I was pastor of a church in Illinois. I rented a room from an elderly woman. I had no need of more room as I was young and unmarried at the time. One afternoon, one of her sons came home to visit his mother and to spend the night there. He was a banker living about 50 miles away from our village. Since he knew I was a preacher, he opened a conversation. He was fully committed to Christian Science. His mother was a Lutheran. Our discussion lasted all evening, and a part of the

night. Neither one yielded to the other, but we had agreed to be civil in our discussion. I left that pastorate of 2 years and moved to Nebraska. Some years after our conversation I heard that this man, a well-known banker, had committed suicide in the depression years when thousands of banks failed. I wish to point out that his religious philosophy did not sustain him. It was a false system of religion. In the town mentioned, I noticed an older man was walking the sidewalks daily. He seemed to be bewildered. I discovered that he had been a leading person in the church which I served. Members told me that his daughters had given him Christian Science literature and that he accepted this religious philosophy. As a teacher of an adult class, he brought in much of that teaching in the class study. The church gave him the alternative either to desist from this teaching, or be expelled as a member of the church. He chose the latter. I went to his home occasionally to visit his ailing wife. She maintained her true faith. In the devotional period he always walked out. He would have no fellowship with his wife, and her pastor. Some months later he had cancer, and died after some weeks. Someone had called the

village doctor. At that time, no followers of Mary Eddy Baker sought medical aid. The doctor told me on his last visit that the man tried to put his arms around the doctor, and he said "I needed you before!" Christian Science left him stranded without a church home, lacking fellowship at home, and with the old friends who came to his place.

As long as he could, he walked on the streets. I conducted the funeral, as his wife insisted I should. This is what a well-known cult did—it wrenched a good church member away from a delightful fellowship, and allowed him to die committed to a false religious system. Cultic literature distributed these days is doing much damage, especially to the youth, and those who do not have a solid foundation on which to anchor their faith. Millions in America are being led astray by the massive impact of false literature directed by skillful propagandists. I am thankful to God for having a part during these many years to help many misguided people. I have given you a message on this matter built around my experience through the years. I may share with you later, cultic activities as I have known them in more recent years.

“THE METAPHYSICAL MYTH”

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Metaphysics is the name given to research about the eternal and universal nature of things, including the structure of the mind and the laws that govern its functions. That sounds innocent enough, until you realize that this branch of speculative religious philosophy has a death-grip

on millions and millions of people world-wide. Based on Hindu cosmology, this system of humanistic thought is evident in many cults, both past and present.

Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Christian Science, and The Unity School of Christianity are but a few of its

earlier American manifestations. These theosophical schools flourished since the middle of the last century and then were eclipsed by the newer and larger counterfeits of Christianity. However, in the last decade, this philosophic religion has found new rootage and growth, especially in the New Age Movement of our times. Today, Science of Mind, Transcendental Meditation, Ekankar, and other modified forms of Hinduism attract multitudes of followers. The popular books by movie actress Shirley MacLaine, are another demonstration of this phenomena.

The Promises

Every one of these metaphysical religions promise a new understanding of the unknown (Gnosticism); self-discovery and oneness with the universe (Monism); and a new relationship with the so-called "ultimate of substances" - mind and matter (Dualism). In addition, they promise such practical benefits as better time management, improved concentration, the need for less sleep, and greater physical and mental capacities with little or no fatigue. They claim, with proper training, you can direct your mind to the fulfilling of any goal you wish. It is the widespread notion that "whatever the mind can conceive, and believe, it can achieve."

Glowing testimonies of celebrities, and others, as to the amazing benefits of metaphysical science are very convincing to the carnal mind. All of this has a very strong appeal to the natural man who is looking for a quick-fix for his personal problems. As a result, millions of people are caught up in a Satanic system of error that needs to be exposed.

Common Denominators

There are many unique claims made by each form of this ancient counterfeit, but there are also many common denominators. The first of these is their "scriptures." Some take the form of their founder's writings, such as the ancient Vedas and Brahmanas of Hinduism. Others include absolutely mythical claims for non-existent scriptures such as the "Akashic Records." The recently-formed "non-religious" School of Metaphysics (SOM), which claims access to these fictitious "records," says that they contain no less than "every thought, every occurrence, and every action that has ever happened in this universe!" It is all recorded on an ethereal substance called "Akasha" which supposedly exists on the "astral plane"—one of several levels of cosmic existence. Basic to each branch of metaphysics is their own unique source of knowledge—the metaphoric scriptures. This is what gives them their authority.

The Sub-Conscious

Followers of SOM claim they can read the "Akashic Records" through the controlled use of the sub-conscious. This ability, they say, allows them to read the past lives of themselves and others—including their own pre-existence thousands of years ago. Other manifestations include telepathy, clairvoyance, and astral projection which is purportedly used to find the answers to the fundamental questions of matter and existence. These spiritual exercises are supposed to provide fresh insights into the present life and induce spiritual growth. In addition, they promise an absolute analysis of fami-

ly and business relationships, plus aids to better health and personality development. What powers lie in the sub-conscious! It is amazing the Bible never speaks of this!

The Quest For Godhood

They believe that the structure of the mind includes not the conscious and the sub-conscious, but also the "super conscious," which is the basis for being whole and at one with the universe. The attainment of the super-conscious state is reached by progression through the various levels of the mind, which some say, is rarely reached in a single lifetime! This is simple humanism which replaces God with man and causes some people to believe that they actually are progressing toward godhood.

This is the monstrous notion that Satan has been planting in the minds of people since the beginning (Genesis 3:5). It is also found in varying degrees in many cults outside the metaphysical camp, including Mormonism, The World-Wide Church of God, The Unification Church, and The Way International.

The Cycles of Reincarnation

Another common denominator is the widespread belief in reincarnation, or the idea that all souls are eternal, fixed in number, and that they progress (or regress) through the eons of time in various forms of living creatures. This, again, is basic Hinduism and is experiencing a tremen-

dous revival in our country.

The sub-conscious mind, properly oriented, is supposed to be able to read and relive these former existences and thus provide valuable insights for living now. This knowledge is then an essential for advancement in the next state of existence. The logic of this belief appeals to multitudes in this seemingly enlightened age and is difficult to refute apart from the Word of God.

But that's the key—the Bible—the one and only authoritative message from the Almighty. Our secularized society has thrown out the only true guide for this life and the life to come. In its place have come these myths, the super-counterfeits of the Devil that require in-depth Bible study and Holy Spirit enlightenment to refute and overcome.

It is extremely important that we recognize that Satan has his "angels of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14) propagating these ancient lies in ever increasing and appealing forms. The Bible warns that many will be deceived as this age draws to a close (Matthew 24:24).

It has been the purpose of this article to identify these false spirits, to alert the unwary, and hopefully to "snatch some from the fire and save them" (Jude 23). Metaphysical religion, in all of its forms, is a myth and must be rejected totally. Isaiah reminded us: "If they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them" (8:20). We would do well to heed that timeless warning.

NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE DISCERNER

Some of you have relatives, friends, and also pastors who would enjoy reading *The Discerner*. Why not send in a subscription for them for \$2.00 a year? The publication has pertinent information on the Cults which will be appreciated.

EXPOSING ERROR: IS IT WORTH WHILE?

by the late H. A. IRONSIDE, D.D.

(Long time Pastor of Moody Memorial Church, Chicago)

Objection is often raised, even by some in the Faith, regarding the exposure of error as being entirely negative and of no real edification. Of late, the hue and cry has been against any and all negative teaching. But the brethren who assume this attitude forget that a large part of the New Testament, both of the teaching of our blessed Lord Himself and the writings of the apostles, is made up of this very character of ministry—namely, showing the satanic origin, and therefore the unsettling results, of the propagation of erroneous systems which Peter, in his second Epistle, so definitely refers to as “damnable heresies.”

Our Lord prophesied, “Many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” Within our own day, how many false prophets have risen; and oh, how many are the deceived! Paul predicted, I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch.” My own observation is that these “grievous wolves,” alone and in packs, are not sparing even the most favored flocks. Under-shepherds in these “perilous times” will do well to note the Apostle’s warning, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.” It is as important in these days as in Paul’s—in fact, it is increasingly important—to expose the many types of false teaching that, on every hand, abound more and

more.

We are called upon to “contend earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered to the saints,” while we hold the truth in love. The Faith means the whole body of revealed truth, and, to contend for *all* of God’s truth, necessitates some negative teaching. The choice is not left with us. Jude said he preferred a different, a pleasanter theme,—“Beloved, my whole concern was to write to you on the subject of our common salvation, but *I am forced* to write you an appeal to defend the Faith which has once for all been committed to the saints; for certain persons have slipped in by stealth (their doom has been predicted long ago), impious creatures who pervert the grace of our God” (Jude 3, 4, Moffat). Paul likewise admonishes us to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Eph. 5:11, R.S.V.).

This does not imply harsh treatment of those entrapped by error—quite the opposite. If it be objected that exposure of error necessitates unkind reflection upon others who do not see as we do, our answer is, it has always been the duty of every loyal servant of Christ to warn against any teaching that would make Him less precious, or cast reflection upon His finished redemptive work and the all-sufficiency of His present service as our great High Priest and Advocate.

Every system of teaching can be judged by what it sets forth as to these fundamental truths of the Faith. “What think ye of Christ?” is still the true test of every creed. The

Christ of the Bible is certainly not the christ of any false ism. Each of the cults has its hideous caricature of our lovely Lord.

Let us who have been redeemed at the cost of His precious blood, be "good soldiers of Jesus Christ." As the battle against the forces of evil waxes ever more hot, we have need for God-given valor. There is constant temptation to compromise. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." It is always right to stand firmly for what God has revealed concerning His blessed Son's person and work. The "father of lies" deals in half-truths, and specializes in most subtle fallacies concerning the Lord Jesus, our sole and sufficient Saviour.

Error is like leaven, of which we read, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Truth mixed with error is equivalent to all error, except that it is more innocent looking, and therefore more dangerous. God hates such a mixture! Any error, or any truth-and-error mixture, calls for

definite exposure and repudiation. To condone such is to be unfaithful to God and His Word, and treacherous to imperiled souls for whom Christ died.

Exposing error is most unpopular work. But from every true standpoint, it is worth-while work. To our Saviour, it means that He receives from us, His blood-bought ones, the loyalty that is His due. To ourselves, if we consider "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," it insures future reward, a thousand-fold. And to souls "caught in the snare of the fowler"—how many of them God only knows—it may mean light and life, abundant and everlasting.

NOTE: While visiting in our office in the fall of 1950, Dr. Harry A. Ironside dictated the above article for The DISCERNER. His eye-sight was so nearly gone, he could not read. To be sure that it was just what he wanted, he had the article read back to him twice. He passed away the 15th of January, 1951.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS ROCK?

A Conservative Answer

*by Danny M. Sweatt, Associate Pastor
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I was asked by Dr. Sumner to answer the rather lengthy article, "Should Christians Rock?" by Al Menconi. By his own admission, after having spoken on rock music for over fourteen years, in the last four years Menconi has come to accept what he calls "Christian Rock" as being worthy music for the Christian. He further states, "It has practically been

the only thing I have listened to since then . . ."

He says, "A handful of prominent evangelists in this country have been teaching biblically unsound ideas regarding Christian music. I know. I used to teach them, too." He further observes, "I don't know if they are purposely stretching Scripture to match their opinions or if they got

their information from irresponsible sources. Whatever the case, they are being quoted by parents and pastors to justify their prejudices against a type of Christian music that is not to their personal liking" (emphasis mine).

He admits having to work through emotions of anger, depression and causticity before setting out to write the article with a "grieved spirit."

He chooses not to name specific people who hold to the positions he readily attacks, but accuses them anonymously of "perpetuating rumors . . . rash judgments" and of making "irresponsible statements that have little or no basis in God's truth."

It must be observed first of all, that although Mr. Menconi constantly admonishes these unnamed Christian leaders not to be judgmental of those who differ in their choice of music, he constantly ignores his own advice.

While this writer readily admits there have been many indefensible statements made publically and in print condemning contemporary Christian music (referred to hereafter as CCM), it does not follow that there are no valid concerns, nor does it follow that because an apologist for CCM can select a few questionable statements and take them apart, that there are no valid arguments.

The first position he attacks is, "Any music that does not encourage worship and praise or elicit a sense of joy is not truly Christian music," and, as a corollary, "All Christian music should be quiet and reverent . . . all Christian music must be appropriate for a church service"

While never hearing anyone make the statement he contradicts, this writer agrees with his conclusion.

"We are to sing songs that will help us focus our thoughts on God's thoughts (Scripture and scriptural principles), since the basis of Christian music should have the same purpose of Scripture . . . for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness."

Mr. Menconi seeks to establish the validity of a genre of sacred music which would be unacceptable in church by acceptable elsewhere. He states, "I fully agree that most contemporary Christian music is not appropriate for church services . . ." He goes on to defend its use outside the church. Any thoughtful student of Scripture who understands God's plan for this age should certainly question any so-called ministry that is not appropriate for any church service, and indeed must be carried on outside the authority and structure of the church.

The differences in the purpose of sacred songs, "doctrine, reproof," etc. certainly allow for different styles of expression beyond worship and praise, but these differences do not allow for going beyond the bounds of what is a proper use of Scripture. Any setting in which a clear declaration of Scripture would be appropriate should allow for sacred song appropriate to the occasion and the purpose. This does not mean that every song is appropriate to every service, but that every good song should be appropriate in some type of service.

Also, Mr. Menconi condemns those who reject contemporary Christian musicians because of their outward similarity to "the world." Like it or not, just as surely as "God looketh on the heart," "man looketh on the outward appearance." Men, corporations

and movements are judged by outward appearance because outward appearance has always demonstrated an inward attitude.

The quality of a tree is judged by the fruit that hangs on its branches. If communication of the Scriptures is the purpose of the contemporary Christian musician, as Mr. Menconi assures us, it seems logical that they would be glad to alter their appearance so as not to alienate the large segment of people who see them as worldly. Being "all things to all men" can work both ways.

He accuses us of saying "that contemporary Christian music sounds like the world . . ." and "that certain music styles are worldly because they appeal to the flesh." That accusation is certainly true. With this statement he has introduced two problems of CCM, worldly associations and sensual music.

Worldly associations must be a viable concern of the obedient Christian. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, Israel's complete assimilation of a heathen culture is blamed on spiritual leadership and on this basis, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and the profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean . . ." (Ezekiel 22:26). Profane is defined as secular, irreverent, unholy. When the lines between the holy and the profane cease to be clearly drawn by spiritual leadership, God's people lose the ability to distinguish the difference. Taking that which is **profane** in its origins, **profane** in its style and **profane** in its associations and calling it **holy** does not make it so, and only serves to confuse people who are

seeking to learn the difference.

While music that is profane by its associations may or may not be harmful in itself, there is the real and present danger that the listener, being taken with the style and enamored with the sound, can by the music be led toward materials that are poison to the spirit.

While a clearly-defined description of sensuality is beyond this writer's ability, everyone, including Mr. Menconi, must admit that there is such a thing as "sensual music." If one hundred different musicians, pastors, or sociologists were asked to describe such music or how it effects man, there would doubtless be one hundred different answers given. Sensuality varies from culture to culture, from age to age, and even from person to person. What is sensual to one may not be to another. Be that as it may, to deny that sensual music exists would not only deny the findings of musical scholars and thinkers through the centuries, but also ignore what is common knowledge among secular musicians and musicologists.

Let me say without fear of contradiction that the **only** musicians in the world—or, for that matter, in musical history—who have ever said that music is amoral are apologists for CCM.

Sensuality is difficult to define because, as Mr. Menconi points out, "the flesh" is difficult to accurately identify; however, "sensual" is understood to refer, both biblically and is common usage, to that which appeals to the flesh; i.e., the old man. It is true that the Greek word "sarx" translated "flesh" in our English Bibles has a broad spectrum of meaning; however, it is not too difficult to

understand that “the flesh” spoken of in Galatians 5 refers to the “old man” or the “carnal nature” that is indeed at war with the new man; i.e., the spiritual nature received at the new birth. Given the certainty of this warfare between the flesh and the spirit described in Galatians, anything that is sensual and feeds the flesh must hinder my spiritual development. To defend that which is sensual and appeals to “the flesh,” as Mr. Menconi does, is very foolish, indeed.

Mr. Menconi, feigning ignorance of the biblical meaning of the flesh, arrives at this most unwise and unscriptural conclusion, “If you eliminate every Christian artist who has fleshly appeal, the only Christian music style left would be Gregorian chant.” There is no circumstance under which a Christian writer who accepts biblical authority should ever be in a position of excusing what God condemns. Sensuality is just as destructive in Christian music as it is in secular music. In I Peter 1:14 the Scripture declares, “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” To extend it doesn’t exist, is stupid.

The relationship of the music to the text has been variously described. Mr. Menconi has invented a new one and, on the basis of his imperfect allegory, he comes to some rather bizarre conclusions. He likens the text to meat and the music to the spices with which it is flavored. He says, in essence, some like it hot, some like it cold, some like it in the pot nine days old. Then he makes this gigantic leap in reasoning that

whether or not one likes spicy food is a matter of taste—the type of music one likes is a matter of taste—the music is no more important to the text than spices are to meat. The fallacy of his conclusion should be as evident to the thoughtful reader as the weakness of his logic.

Using his picture of the text likened to meat, it would be far more accurate to liken the music to the plate on which it is served. Indeed, the music is the vehicle that carries the text. One cannot escape the truth mentioned by Jay Adams, in his book *Communicating With Twentieth Century Man*, that substance is perceived by the form in which it is presented. The message is understood and colored by the form of communication. So, using Mr. Menconi’s picture, suppose we want to serve a beautiful prime steak to an honored guest. When it is cooked and prepared to perfection, I go to a nearby garbage can and select a plate covered with mold, maggots and other assorted corruption on which to serve my feast. The meat may not be appreciably altered, but its effect on the potential diner most certainly would be. To be sure, one used to eating from garbage cans would be less offended than others, but dirty plates are no more appropriate for fine steaks than sensual music is to a biblical message.

Next, Mr. Menconi builds another straw man to tear down by offering, as the only alternative to CCM, “easy listening” type songs, written fifty years ago and having no relevance to today’s real world. That is simply not accurate. As a working music director, 85% of the music we present has been written or arranged in the last ten years (filling anyone’s definition

of contemporary, in the dictionary sense). Within the bounds of propriety there is endless variety, both in musical styles and in subject matter. He seems to be suggesting either Rock or Bach. That is a gross misstatement of fact.

In his article in defense of CCM, or, as he calls it, Christian Rock, Al Menconi makes basic errors, none of which is new as an apologetic for disobedience. The oldest and most worn is, "The end justifies the means." Over and over again he says such things as, "Thousands upon thousands of Christians are being ministered to, challenged, and prepared to live out their faith in the real world."

I am certain this writer does not have to point out the biblical contradictions to this old argument. That some good is accomplished or that ministry meets with general approval has never substantiated the righteousness of an activity. This writer readily admits that anytime the Word of God is presented, even in an inappropriate way, there is the possibility that some good will be done. Sometimes God in His grace works in spite of man's ignorance or even disobedience, but he never approves of either. To obey will ever be better than sacrifice. While disobedient service may accomplish limited

good, obedient service enjoys God's full measure of blessing.

The next basic error in his arguments is that CCM enjoys wide acceptance among Christians. To that the answer is simple. The question must never be "is it acceptable to sinful men," but, rather, "is it holy in the sight of a righteous God?" As long as men dwell on the plane of human acceptability, he will never understand God's standard of holiness.

In conclusion, this article could be caricatured this way. Eddie Evangelist has concluded that smoking cigarettes causes deafness because he knows a deaf man who smokes. So Eddie goes the length and breadth of the land condemning smoking because it makes men deaf. Soon others are convinced also and take up Eddie's cry.

Allen Apologist, being of a more scientific nature, through exhaustive study, demonstrates conclusively that Eddie is wrong. Smoking does not cause deafness. But Allen goes a step farther and says smoking is wonderful because so many people enjoy it and it definitely does not make people deaf. He heartily encourages smoking as a wholesome activity.

While Eddie is wrong in his approach and his information, Allen is wrong in his conclusion.

THE PLAIN (?) TRUTH!

Many of us wondered whether the "Armstrong" empire would be able to continue after his death, especially, too, with reported financial troubles. However, it certainly appears that, at the moment, they are alive and kicking and are still to be seen as a serious threat to true Christianity.

In the recent editions of their magazine, under their new publisher, Joseph W. Tkach, they have been serializing Herbert W. Armstrong's last book, MYSTERY OF THE AGES. If anybody is still wondering what is wrong with THE PLAIN TRUTH and its teachings, they only

have to read these articles. They contain the classic pointers of Cults, such as, 'we are the true church; all others have got it wrong; even though the Bible says . . . this is what it actually means . . .' Armstrong is not bashful in his claims as this extract from p. 11 of September's PLAIN TRUTH shows: "... the gospel of Christ . . . had not been proclaimed to the world until the first week in 1953, when for the first time in about 1,900 years . . . it went out. It seems today all churches have lost the gospel of Jesus Christ. They preach primarily their gospel about Jesus Christ."

We need no other quote to show that the Armstrong teaching is cultic. [It says that NOBODY in church history, none of the great men who have preached Christ down through the years, have ever preached the Kingdom of God until Armstrong in 1953!] However, an even more astounding claim is made on p. 12: "It is necessary to believe that gospel to be saved! And how can you believe it, unless you know what it is? And for 1,900 years, the world did not know. That gospel was suppressed and replaced."

We, of course, can come to one conclusion from this statement, and that is that, [even though Jesus Christ said on the Cross, "It Is Finished," NO ONE could be saved until 1953 when Armstrong finally came as a second saviour(?), and preached the gospel that no one had preached after Jesus.] What an incredible claim that, in no way, can be backed up.

To Armstrong, there is really only one message, it is the gospel OF Christ, which he preaches, whereas

the rest of the churches have substituted a gospel ABOUT Christ. Armstrong's gospel is one of the physical return of Jesus to set up His kingdom on earth when everything is going to be ok. The problem, of course, that we are left with is, who will be in this kingdom? Armstrong answers, "... the dead in Christ, those who have received and been led by God's Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11, 14), will rise in a gigantic resurrection, made immortal, including all the prophets of old (Luke 13:28). Those who have the Spirit of God, then living, shall be instantaneously changed from mortal to immortal . . ." (ibid, p. 23).

This explanation of who will be in the kingdom gives two sets of problems; firstly, with Armstrong's own theology; secondly, with the Scriptures. As far as his own theology is concerned, if you need to believe the gospel to be saved—and he only started preaching the gospel in 1953—apart from a few people around the time of Jesus, no one else prior to 1953 could have received or been led by God's Holy Spirit.

As far as the Scriptures are concerned, it is clear that Armstrong has missed out whole chunks. There is little or nothing about putting off the old nature of sin and putting on Christ. It seems that to Armstrong, forgiveness of sin appears to be almost non-essential as far as entering the kingdom is concerned.

—From *REACHOUT*
A Christian Ministry to the
Cults, Twickenham, England

BOOKS IN STOCK AND AVAILABLE FROM OUR OFFICE

REASONING WITH JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES by Kevin R. Quick, reviewed in the last issue of the *DISCERNER*, was priced at \$5.95. The correct price is \$5.00. This is a very good tool! We highly recommend it.

* * * *

THE SIGN OF THE LAST DAYS by Carl Olof Jonsson and Wolfgang Herbst. The authors have produced a monumental work regarding past and present prophecies, or guesses, as to the end of this age. Proving wrong, especially predictions by The Watchtower Society of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists, this very well researched and documented book will be a valued addition to your prophetic library. One of the plus features is that documentation is made in the footnotes at the bottom of each page.

Topics covered in the various chapters include Famine, Earthquakes, Pestilences, Wars and Lawlessness. Three appendices present important information on Seismology, Christ's "Coming" or "Presence," and The Four Horsemen of The Apocalypse.

This is a real bargain and an informative one! 271pp, \$7.95.

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BEYOND SEDUCTION by Dave Hunt. In his earlier book, **THE SEDUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY**, the author brought readers face-to-face with the truth that the only remedy for deception and apostasy is to return to a true biblical foundation

for Christian living. In this follow-up book, he explores the Biblical and historical view of Christian teachings within the church. A fitting and challenging sequel to **BEYOND SEDUCTION!** 282pp, \$7.95.

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JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES ANSWERED VERSE BY VERSE by David A. Reed. Here is a quick reference guide to answer the JW's misuse of Bible verses. This book will show how to use the very verses they use to lead them into the truth and to Christ. The several indexes—either the table of contents, the Scripture index, or the subject index—are all tremendous helps in rapidly finding what is needed. There are also practical techniques for sharing the Gospel with them.

140pp, paper, \$5.95

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UNDERSTANDING CULTS AND NEW RELIGIONS by Irving Hexham & Karla Poewe. Here we have a fresh approach to the study of cults. This book presents a convincing account of what it is about our society and values in the past few decades that has helped create our cultish community. The authors argue that new religious movements are in fact neither very new nor very religious; rather, they are primarily magical and therapeutic in nature. It is a useful tool for anyone who is interested in understanding just what is going on in our New Age-oriented world. 170pp, paper, \$8.95

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

John E. Dahlin, Editor

QUESTION . . . Does Religion Analysis Service oppose all cultic groups?

ANSWER . . . We realize there are variations among the cults, but the fact is, all of them err on some fundamental doctrines. In my many years of directing our agency, and in evaluating the teachings of the various cults, I have not found a single one that holds a Scriptural position on the most vital doctrines. With regard to the Deity of Christ, none takes a solid Scriptural position. (See I Jn. 4:1-5). This separates them from Bible-believing organizations, and on the matter of the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, make them separate from those who adhere to the fundamental doctrines.

QUESTION . . . Do we have any evidence that certain groups have abandoned their false teachings and returned to the beliefs of historic Christianity?

ANSWER . . . With reference to groups of cults, I am not aware of any which have returned to the Scriptural position, but quite a number of individuals and families have given up the false teachings they once believed. We do wish the number had been larger. The false systems hold a strong grip on people who have been entangled in error.