

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

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# The DISCERNER

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## AN EVALUATION OF CULTIC EXPANSION IN OUR TIME

*By Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor*

The expansion of the cults during recent decades has never been equaled in past generations. They have had a phenomenal success in gaining followers, and in penetrating areas which in the past have been controlled by the mainline denominations. At the turn of this century, there were only five identifiable cults in America. The most reliable information that we have at present is that the number of these spurious groups has reached 1,500. Some writers who recklessly use figures, claim that these off-center groups have reached 5,000 in number. Whatever the figures may add up to it is, however, astonishing to witness the great expansion of the cults during the past generation. Experts in the study of cults have informed me that the total cultic population has now reached twenty-million in the United States.

We might logically ask, what is the definition of a cult? A cult is a religious group which excessively emphasizes certain teachings. A second definition we would perhaps add is: a cult is a group which parts company with the normative expression of the Christian religion. In other words, the cults chart their own course relative

to their religious beliefs and practices. If the numerical statement above is reasonably correct, it means that the cults constitute one-tenth of our national population in the United States—a formidable minority. If we add to this record, the zeal and determination of these cultic groups, it is a matter which ought not to be taken lightly or ignored. It is wise not to write these groups off as being unimportant with regard to the religious life of our country. To me, it constitutes a sobering matter, and a real challenge, also, to Bible-believing Christians. All of us need to take cognizance of this present-day threat confronting genuine Christianity.

### **The Prevailing Public Position Towards The Cults**

The position taken obviously varies, relatively considered, with regard to the off-center groups. In one considerable segment of our population, the cults are ignored as not being important enough even of evaluation. They say that time can be better spent than to be exercised over the activities of these non-evangelical groups or seek to evaluate their work. This is what well may be called a do-nothing policy with regard to the

cults. This attitude reveals a kind of apathy or indifference to these spurious groups which confront people in almost every community.

Another position is to **compromise** our relationship with reference to these cultic groups. This is precisely what the liberal element in our society is practicing today. For an example, we might refer to the National Council of Churches which has admitted certain cults into membership, The Reorganized Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormon). Likewise, the National Council of Churches received into membership one of the oldest cults in America, namely: The Swedenborg group. It is not a large organization, but it is widely distributed in many nations of the Western world. Still another viewpoint held by a considerable number of people is a **condemnatory attitude** towards those who have departed from the Biblical Truth. The widely known and respected American Evangelist, Biederwolf, very active half a century ago, in both preaching and writing, took a hard line course against the cultic groups. He did this with an acid tongue both in his preaching and written material. It was very definitely the general position held at that time. Not only were the unvarnished facts given, but condemnatory statements on the cults were also provided. Some of us may question the wisdom of this course. While no accommodation needs to be made with regard to the cults, I believe there is a better way in achieving good results in dealing with these people.

We, in Religion Analysis Service, realize that these misguided elements in our religious sphere are also people for whom Christ died, and it is right

that we **manifest some compassion** for them, even though they have erred in departing from the major Biblical doctrines. Both James and Jude take this path in their Letters, Jude, vs. 22-23, and James 5:30. We have helped many in providing sound Scriptural material for their enlightenment and help, and we offer to give counsel to those who seek help. This represents no compromise or surrender in dealing with the victims of the cults.

### **Specific Biblical Doctrines Rejected By The Cults**

The **Deity of Jesus Christ** is being undermined and actually rejected by practically all the cults in our time. This doctrine has been the **center-piece** of Biblical Christianity during the course of Church History. I am not aware of any single cult that supports the foundational doctrines which I am discussing in these pages. Unfortunately, these basic doctrines are compromised and diluted by all the cultic systems with which I am acquainted.

The first one I am discussing is **The Deity of Christ**. Our Lord never hesitated to emphasize His divine attributes. Let me quote a few of His clear statements which verifies His position. He said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given me" (Mt. 28:18), and, under oath before the high priest, He stated that He was the Son of God and possessed divine attributes. The Jewish leaders understood His clear statement and called it blasphemy. In His declarations from time to time He never hesitated to state that He was co-equal with God, His Father. Listen to His words: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; I and the

Father are One" (Jn. 14:9), and, during the time of His incarnation, He maintained His Divine nature. He said, even before His critics: "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin" (Mk. 3:10). The Apostle Paul gave full support to our Lord's declaration in these words: "In Him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

This doctrine is rejected by the cults. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses say that Christ was the first among the created beings. This makes our Lord no higher than angels, who also are created beings. The Mormons have compromised their position regarding Christ's Deity. Christian Science has repudiated the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Cultists acknowledge the Son of God as a great thinker, teacher, and idealist, but they do not accept the doctrine of His Deity. Paul writes, "Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). As we well realize, the capstone of Biblical theology is Christ's resurrection from the dead. Paul built his entire Christian theology on the doctrine of Christ's resurrection. Read his masterly arguments in I Cor. 15. No scholar, either theological or secular, has been able to refute our Lord's resurrection. It has remained the foundational pillar of the Christian religion throughout Church History.

I wish also to include in this article, **The Doctrine of the Atonement** in discussing truths which the cults reject. It clearly involves the Biblical teaching on the subject of reconciliation. This important matter is sustained in both the Old Testament and

the New Testament. It constitutes the centrality of the teachings of the Apostle Paul, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-4). Peter also puts the same thought in a moving statement, "Christ has suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God" (I Pet. 3:18). John writes: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). The statement in Matthew's Gospel is much the same, "My blood was shed for many for the remission of sin" (Mt. 26:28). The author of Hebrews uses these significant words, "Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sin" (Heb. 9:22).

During my many years of reading cultic writings, I have never discovered any direct, precise statement from the many writers about the efficacy of Christ's redemptive work at Calvary in our behalf. If you readers find such a statement in the cultic material printed, I would appreciate hearing from you. They have an abundance of material about ways and means in coming into an acceptable relationship with God, but on the subject of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ they are silent. Jesus made such a step mandatory in His conversation with Nicodemus. He said, "Ye must be born again." Overwhelmingly the Scripture emphasizes that our redemption from sin is possible only through the finished work of Christ on Calvary's cross. Their lengthy discussion of works is an attempt to bypass God's way of salvation through Jesus Christ. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, says scornfully that the

blood of Jesus shed on the cross had no more efficacy than when it flowed through His veins in the body. The Mormon Church makes baptism a necessity for an entrance into heaven. In Herbert W. Armstrong's teaching the legalistic path is the only way to God. The Adventists hold that Sabbath Keeping is the requirement to make a person acceptable before God. All these requirements stated by the cults are through works, and it leaves out grace through faith in Jesus Christ as the way of salvation. They bypass completely the redemptive accomplishment of Christ on the cross.

The subject of Christ's Personal Return is not given any fair consideration by the Cults, with only the exception of the Jehovah's Witnesses, but their treatment of the subject is so warped by their explanation of the coming kingdom, and it merits not even a casual consideration. But on the whole, the cultic groups have no awareness or understanding as to that which the Scriptures teach on this vital subject. The New Testament, as written by the early leaders of the church, gave a real priority to this inspirational doctrine. During this present century, a large number of Bible teachers, pastors, and evangelists gave full recognition of this doctrine in their books and publications. Unfortunately, this trend, once present, has diminished in this generation. There is still much literature available in numerous bookstores on the subject. The cults are committed to spreading their propaganda, and to wrench as many people as possible from their denominational moorings, and lure them into their spurious religious systems. This has been predicted by the writers of the New Testament.

False doctrines have emerged in every area of the world as predicted. The last generation never conceived that such a remarkable fulfillment of Biblical prophecy would take place in such a short period of time. What is significant is that nearly all the New Testament writers had such insight and divine inspiration to predict the events that all of us have witnessed in recent decades. The great falling away and latter-day apostasy were clearly predicted for the end-times.

We could refer to many more deviations from the Scriptural doctrines, but these that we mentioned will suffice. From the cults, no reliable information will be provided. Our organization has chosen to stand in the gap, and provide direction and information needed by people in our generation. Our organization is dedicated to provide illumination and information regarding the cultic threat in our time. We are convinced that the founders of Religion Analysis Service believed that God raised up our ministry for such a time as this. Our ministry in literature is a sincere attempt to meet a great need of direction by people now living during the latter-days.

Ours is not as appealing and glamorous as many other projects are today. Some of these present-day projects are challenging and worthy of support.

Many appeals stir the hearts and emotions of people. Every week I receive requests for funds in order to maintain these worthy areas of service for God. Our work and ministry is mainly behind the scene. We deal with those whose needs are very real, but this we do largely through the mail and by means of the telephone.

Our work is not brought ahead by the use of large meeting places and churches. This is generally effective and inspiring to the public when the project is openly considered. We have helped people, thousands of them, and it is generally unknown to the public. Scores and scores of people communicate with us, and it is uniformly that they express appreciation for the great help we have been to them in some difficult situations, particularly when they have been disturbed and confused through cultic teachings. It warms and even thrills our hearts to know that we have been able to help many people once spiritually enslaved through cultic teachings and are now actively involved in genuine Christian work. The generosity of people has often been stimulated by that which they hear and see. We, in our ministry, do not have the same advantage in dramatic appeals.

Let me illustrate this in another vital area in our lives. All of us have our individual priorities arranged with respect to giving. Many very fine people need to rearrange their priorities from time to time. I will share that which constitutes my top

priority. Many of you know I have been a long-time Bible teacher, college and seminary teacher, on radio network ministry, and president and editor of Religion Analysis Service. Strange as it might seem to you, my first priority is to help people who have been side-tracked and spiritually harmed by cultic teachings. Very few organizations in our country are devoted to this ministry. It is as scarce as hen's teeth. Some even classify this work as negative, not positive. I consider it as positive, however, as anything can be, when we succeed in restoring people from error to joyful Christians. Perhaps I should put in print the scores of testimonies we have received. It has helped to keep me in this work for these many years. The Lord was grieved with respect to the few who were willing to enter into the harvest. We are exhorted to pray about this situation, and this we do. Many others might well join us in prayer that this much-needed ministry may continue and not be stranded for lack of funds.

This, then, constitutes some appropriate thoughts and conclusions reached during a long ministry.

## WHEN CHRISTIANS MEET MORMONS

*by James R. Spencer  
Idaho Falls, Idaho*

When the Apostle Paul arrived in Athens, Greece, in A.D. 49, "he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols . . . All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (Acts 17:16, 21).

Sounds like modern America, doesn't it?

The doorbell rings and you find two well-dressed young men waiting. Their faces are scrubbed and their smiles bright. They'd like to talk with you, they say, about God.

Your mind races. Are they Mormons? Jehovah's Witnesses? Members of some group you barely know about? Do you invite them in, or beg off?

Aggressive, proselytizing cult members are everywhere—at the airport, the train terminal, even living next door—looking for converts. It's the ancient Mars Hill all over.

What's the Christian response? Starting in this issue, and continuing every other month, we'll let experts explain the best ways to interact with cult members. We'll help you understand the cults' various appeals, point out important differences from biblical Christianity and show how to let the Gospel shine strong.

This month we asked James R. Spencer to write about Mormonism. He's the author of *Beyond Mormonism* and *Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?* (Chosen Books). He was previously an elder in the Mormon Church; now he's pastor of the 200-member Shiloh Christian Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Bob and Gretchen Passantino tell us about the New Age movement. They direct the Southern California-based Answers in Action organization and moderate a weekly radio talk show with the same name. Previously they directed a cult-watching group, were staff members at Walter Martin's Christian Research Institute and wrote *Answers to the Cultist at Your Door* (Harvest House).

In April "*The Mars Hill Collection*" will turn to Jehovah's Witnesses and Islam. Following that, the agenda is up to you. What groups concern you most? Where do you need critical information? Let the editors know.

Each week I receive letters from people who have left or are trying to leave the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—the Mormon Church. The following are typical:

"... I feel cheated, deceived and spiritually raped by a doctrine and philosophy I embraced and trusted."

"I need help! Am I being brain-washed? Can these good people . . . be devils in disguise? Please write or call soon."

"The one thing I'd tell anyone is that it's easy to join the Mormon Church, but a physical and mental hell to get out."

My Christian friends are astonished at these letters. How can such nice, clean-cut people be dead wrong, members of a *cult*? How do we reconcile our patriotic, industrious Latter-day Saint neighbors with the distressing reality of their religion?

Understanding Mormonism's heart requires going deeper than the Donnie-and-Marie-Osmond, apple-pie image painted by sophisticated Mormon public relations. What began in 1830 as a group of polygamists has grown into a large (6.5 million members), wealthy and politically powerful nation-within-a-nation covered with a veneer of earnest wholesomeness.

The Mormon Church wields remarkable power. In Salt Lake City it owns both daily newspapers, the largest TV and radio stations and most of the downtown real estate. It controls the state legislature and dominates most municipal governments. All of Utah's U.S. Congressmen are Mormon. And some civil rights have evaporated as the line between church and government has blurred.

Sociologists say Utah, which is two-thirds Mormon, has higher than average rates of rape, divorce, child abuse and teen suicide. The oppressive social system is the in-

evitable tainted fruit from Mormonism's legalistic roots. Mormons believe they must work to achieve higher levels of salvation that could culminate in their becoming gods—if their obedience is complete.

Many Mormons are weary, empty and discouraged. Some feel the church is insensitive to their needs. Women particularly seem discouraged by its inflexible advocacy of large families and the inability to integrate career women.

### Changes On The Way?

But there is hope. Challenges are coming from the outside by Christian organizations such as Ed Decker's "*Saints Alive!*" and inside by honest scholarship at Brigham Young University.

BYU history professor, D. Michael Quinn, for example, is rewriting white-washed accounts of Mormon beginnings. In his *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Signature Books, Salt Lake City), Quinn documents Joseph Smith's dabbling in witchcraft as Mormonism's foundation.

And BYU anthropology professor, Ray T. Matheny, is skeptical about the allegedly divine origin of the Book of Mormon. "King-size problems" exist in accepting the book as a historical document, he says. For example, Smith wrote about a North American civilization that rudimentary archeology proves never existed.

### Encountering Latter-day Saints

Confusion in the Mormon pulpit translates into doubt in the pew. When a disciple loses confidence in Mormonism, he is vulnerable to a bold Christian witness. But the Chris-

tian needs to be sensitive as well. Knowing when to be tough or tender is challenging.

Generally, if the person seems sincere, go more slowly and be softer. If he only seems interested in delivering the missionary message, bring him up short—a tactic one evangelist to Mormons calls "knocking the polish off his testimony."

Walter Martin, author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, says "people who convert to Mormonism must be converted from it." Conversion into the cult is a formal process, including a presentation of "facts," scriptural investigation, testimony and argumentation.

Similar steps are required to exit.

Many Christians are uncomfortable with such encounters. We dislike confrontation, correctly fear manipulation and tend to view argumentation as negative and unpleasant. We're more comfortable "just loving people into the Gospel."

But the 50-million Americans trapped in cults and occult practices will not be won by normal fellowshiping tactics. They are victims, locked out of the true church by their belief that they already possess "The Truth."

Mormons won't hear the Gospel until they realize what they have is inadequate—if not plain devilish. Reaching them requires us to become, as Paul did, "like a Jew, to win the Jews." He challenged Jews in Israel's synagogues, philosophers in Athens, and sorcerers at the temple of Diana in Ephesus. We may not have Paul's boldness, but we can learn his tactics: He confronted their doctrine in their own language.



Of all the variant ideas and concepts, I recommend discussing these three with latter-day Saints:

—The nature of God, specifically the Trinity.

—The nature of revelation—the inspiration of the Bible.

—The Book of Mormon, and why it cannot be Scripture.

### The Nature of God

The best thing to discuss is God's nature, because Mormons do not worship the God of the Scriptures.

Mormons are polytheistic. They believe their god is an exalted man—who had physical relations with the Virgin Mary to produce Jesus—and one of countless gods. Every active and faithful Mormon will become a god as well, if obedient to Mormonism's rules of salvation. They recite, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."

Smith spoke about his polytheism this way: "You have got to learn to be Gods yourselves . . . the same as all the other gods have done before you . . . until you are able to dwell in everlasting burnings and sit in glory . . ." (*Journal of Discourses*, Vol. 6, p. 4).

The witnessing Christian doesn't have to bog down in discussions of God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, holiness or other eternal attributes. All he must do is master basic Trinitarian theology; There is but one God, and within his nature are Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If I had only five minutes with a Mormon, I would ask if he believes his church's polytheistic teaching. Then I'd confront him with the God of the Bible—as I did recently with a Mormon college administrator. I

shared a chain of memorized verses from Isaiah, beginning with 43:10-11.

"'You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the Lord, and apart from me there is no savior.'"

The other verses are Isaiah 44:6-8; 45:5-6 and 18-22; and 46:8-9.

When I finished, the man was uncharacteristically quiet and gentle. He didn't admit that Mormonism is wrong, and I didn't win him to Christ. But I did something in a few minutes he won't forget: I declared the nature and glory of God.

He said a few revealing things. He had secretly watched the movie *The God Makers* in a small Christian church, and his brother was "one of those born-againers." I believe our meeting was providential, and I continue to pray for him.

### Revelation

Another key area is the nature of revelation. Mormons believe Christianity collapsed in the first centuries and that they are the "Church of the Restoration." Smith claimed he was given the Book of Mormon because "many plain and precious truths" had been lost from the Bible. The cult's Eighth Article of Faith claims the Book of Mormon is the Word of God, but the Bible is divine only "insofar as it has been translated correctly."

To reach Mormons we must show the Bible is authoritative. I've developed a simple overview of the Bible's miraculous, word-for-word preservation over the centuries

(which I discuss in *Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?*).

### The Book Of Mormon

One simple but effective discussion involves revisions in the Book of Mormon. Smith claimed he translated the gold plates—which conveniently were taken back into heaven before anybody else could see them—“by the gift and power of God.” He declared the work to be “singularly without error.” Mormon officials still claim it’s a perfect book and that only “sons of Belial” say it has been changed.

But nearly 4,000 changes have been made, one as recently as 1978 when President Spencer W. Kimball allowed blacks to enter the Mormon priesthood. After Kimball’s “revelation,” the Book of Mormon was amended so that dark-skinned converts are no longer said to become “white and delightful;” now they become “pure and delightful.”

Proving changes in the Book of Mormon is easy. Go to a Mormon

bookstore, ask for a reprint of the original 1830 edition and compare it with current editions. Changes pop up on nearly every page, some of them important doctrinal changes. When I confront Latter-day Saints with these, it is sometimes unsettling enough to cause them to reevaluate their faith.

### Fight A Good Fight

To win Latter-day Saints, we must understand that Mormonism is not Protestantism with doctrinal problems. It preaches “another Jesus,” possesses “a different spirit” and presents “a different gospel” (II Cor. 11:4).

Being convinced of that is the foundation needed to reach Mormons for Christ. By building a specific presentation on the nature of God, revelation, and the Book of Mormon, these precious people *can* be won to the lordship of Jesus.

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of the author

## THE PRESENT DILEMMA WITHIN CHURCHIANITY

*Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor*

This caption expresses best my viewpoint in this brief article. In using key words properly, it should be pointed out that Christianity more directly involves the historical Gospel as it is known and presented by the Christian Church. While on the other hand, Churchianity refers more directly to the organizational function and activities of the religious groups broadly considered. In other words, the emphasis is given to the general patterns of religion as understood and practiced, broadly considered. The distinctiveness of

these words is altogether proper.

It seems clear that this present dilemma in the general religious community is throughout the world. The dilemma also exists within many other areas in addition to the religious sphere. It is present within the political, economic, and moral spheres of life.

In the religious sphere, which we are discussing in this article, it is a real dilemma on a wide front—and this we identify in Churchianity. As a remedy to this situation, the spirit of ecumenicity is being promoted by the

liberal element in our time. The World Council of Churches, and the National Council of Churches have taken the leadership in the ecumenical movement of this generation. The massive mergers of major denominations and church union constitute the demonstration of the present-day objective of most of the religious bodies in today's world. As the foundation for this church union are the words of Christ in His prayer for oneness in John 17:21, indeed, our Lord did not pray for denominational union, or for the external aspects of it. Our Lord referred to the redeemed people, who are united with Jesus Christ. It does not include the vast number of nominal Christians, or those who have a sort-of-religious piety. One respected pastor told me that less than ten percent of his membership were born-again believers. Fundamentalists are often charged by the Liberals as being guilty of promoting splinterings within Christendom. This generally is a false charge, but when church groups have departed from the true faith, there is no other alternative but to leave such liberal bodies when they no longer maintain their faith in Christ, and fail to adhere to the fundamental doctrines of historic Christianity. In First John we are urged to disengage ourselves from those who fail to acknowledge the incarnation of Jesus Christ and His Deity. In his second Letter, John points this out even more directly, to not have fellowship with those who lack true faith. In fact, he admonishes us not to invite such to our house, but to separate ourselves from them. I do not feel we should practice extremism, and advocate separation not warranted in the Scriptures. Scrip-

tural unity must rest on a solid Scriptural basis.

The Liberal element often proposes positions which are contradictory to the Truth of the Scripture. Often this element will say to people, "Quit quibbling about doctrinal matters and theological tenets, and unite around the person of Christ." This is a misleading statement. Doctrinal truths are all-important and must not be dismissed in that manner.

Moreover, the Liberals in the present dilemma often refer to the cross of Christ, but they misinterpret that phrase. By the cross, they simply mean mainly Christ's obedience to the Father and by love to others at the cross. By a flowery generalization they seek to point out that through His death, mankind will be willing to go God's way. This point of view leaves out the atonement and the finished work at Calvary. Paul's theology was centered in the words, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Bible-believing Christians cannot fellowship spiritually with those who bypass the redemptive work of our Lord. The Liberals are in a dilemma with regard to Biblical truth. They have taken the rationalistic approach which will never lead anyone to God.

Invariably, the Liberals continue to hurl epithets against the fundamentalists with slurring remarks. Their denominations are paralyzed by the social Gospel. Numerically they practically stand still without any growth. Missionaries are withdrawn from the foreign fields for lack of funds. Students attending the seminaries continue to shrink in numbers. A compromised message has no dynamics to move people on-

ward and forward. Such groups find themselves in a dilemma, not certain about the way to proceed. Unity achieved at the expense of God's Truth is a most unsatisfactory position and will leave people in a dilemma of uncertainty. I know a very gifted young man who was planning for the ministry, but tragically he was led off the right track by a very modernistic seminary. He said, "If I could have maintained the faith, I might have saved my ministry, and I believe it would have saved my marriage." They had been divorced, and he went into the theatrical world.

The Apostle Paul, despite suffering in prison, had been confined in a kind of dungeon, and just prior to his execution, he wrote his last message, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." He triumphed in death as a real martyr of the Gospel ministry. There was no cloud overhanging his path. He never experienced being in a dilemma. He was familiar with the road of spiritual certainty. Liberalism will never succeed in making men and women count for God. I have witnessed many people experiencing a dilemma, but no believer dedicated to God will be in such a tragic situation.

## ANOTHER APOSTATE NEW TESTAMENT

by Rev. Ewald Eisele

There was an article in the St. Paul Pioneer Press of October 17, 1987, to which my attention was directed. The title of this article, written by staff writer Clark Morphew, was, "*Did Jesus Actually Say That? Scholars Scrutinize the Bible.*" The article told of a group that calls itself THE JESUS SEMINARS, which has 125 New Testament "scholars." They claim to come from mainline churches and have been working three years to try to find out which, "are the authentic sayings of Jesus" in the four Gospels. The group claims that, so far, many of the sayings attributed to Jesus have been declared to be "bogus."

They base their decisions on what they call the scientific critical method of research which they apply to the four Gospels found in the traditional Bible, and they apply to the four Gospels found in the traditional Bible and also a "recently discovered an-

cient text, 'The Gospel According To Thomas.'" They have rejected all but three of the Beatitudes, Luke 16:19-31, Mark 12:1-11, as well as the seven final sayings of Jesus on the cross. The article states that only the Roman government was responsible for the crucifixion and that the Jews had nothing to do with it. Of course, this would mean that His death had no religious significance and that it was only a civil or politically-inspired act.

Of interest is the way they decide (in a very scholarly use of their particular brand of "scientific critical method") on any particular saying. The article affirms, "It is only through the democratic system of voting that they are able to agree." They cast their individual votes by dropping one of four colored beads into a ballot box. The four beads indicate their preference as to the status of any saying under considera-

tion. The four ways in which they can vote are, 1) That the saying "almost certainly" goes back to Jesus; 2) "probably"; 3) "probably not"; 4) "almost certainly not."

There is not a listing of the members of this "scholarly" group and it would be interesting to know some of the history of their education which allows them to vote "almost" instead of "absolutely" on a saying which God's Holy Spirit inspired a Gospel writer to record! From what is written, it is doubtful if there is one real Bible-believing Christian among them.

The key to just how these "scholars" work is found in one of the opening statements of the author of the article, "At least that's the educated guess of 125 New Testament scholars . . ." Another way they expose their spiritual ignorance is through the "democratic" way in which they come by a decision. Nothing is said of the leading of the Holy Spirit, meditating in united prayer, or of using common sense which would tell them that if this is God's inspired Word then all of it was spoken by one of the three Persons of the Godhead and are all "authentic."

The "scientific critical" methods,

which they say they are using, have always resulted in the prostitution of the inspired Word, and the result that we see is the hodge-podge of perversions (not versions) on the shelves of bookstores today. Unfortunately, the bottom line today is not "scholarship" but "dollarship"—or, how much money can be made by marketing a "new" Bible? The new one these seminar members intend to market will be called "THE NEW RED LETTER EDITION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT." When it is published, "Christian" bookstores that stock it should be boycotted by real Christians.

Certainly it is a sign of the nearness of the end of the age of grace that so many Christians lack any kind of spiritual discernment and are so easily led astray by every "wind of doctrine" that comes along. The need today is for Berean type Christians who will compare Scripture with Scripture to see if all of these "new" things hitting the book shelves of the bookstores are really proclaiming the truth.

As for any infidels who chop up and slaughter the Bible, they are under the anathema of God and will be called on to answer for their infidelity.

## DEALING WITH MODERN-DAY CULTS

by Samuel Fisk, El Cerrito, CA

"There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:7-9). "For there are many . . . deceivers . . . whose mouths

must be stopped . . . teaching things which they ought not" (Tit. 1:10-11; Matt. 24:24; II Tim. 4:4; I John 4:1).

**The Christian's Obligations when confronted by New or Strange Teachings**

1. Beware; be alert to possible

deceit and methods used to take in the unsuspecting. I Pet. 5:8; Matt. 7:15, 24:4; Acts 20:31; Phil. 3:2; II Pet. 3:17.

2. Investigation and a Careful Test. I John 4:1; I Thess. 5:21; Rev. 2:2, I Cor. 2:15.

3. When found false, sound a warning against. Acts 20:31; II Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:13; Col. 1:28.

### Tests By Which to Judge any Religious Teaching

1. Do they acknowledge the authority, sufficiency and finality of the Word of God? Rev. 22:18-19; Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5; Rom. 3:1-2; Isa. 8:20; Mt. 22:29; II Tim. 3:16-17; Jude 3, RV; Psalm 119:89.

2. What is their attitude toward the person of Christ; do they hold to the incarnation and full Lordship of Christ? I Jn. 4:2-3; I Cor. 12:3. On the Deity of Christ? Jn. 1:1; Heb. 1:8.

3. Does it exalt human leaders? Jn. 5:43-44; I Cor. 3:4, 7, 21; II Cor. 10:17-18; Jas. 2:1; Jude 16; Matt. 23:2, 6-10. Contra: Exalt Christ, Col. 1:18; Jn. 16:14.

4. Does it put man's approach to God on the basis of human merit or grace? Rom. 10:3. Right basis: Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 4:5; Gal. 2:16, 21; Tit. 3:5.

5. Do they teach the endless and irrevocable punishment of unbelievers? Gen. 3:4; Mt. 18:8, 25:41, 46; Mk. 3:29; II Thess. 1:9; Jude 7; Rev. 14:11, 20:10.

### Suggestions for Discussions with Cultists

1. Select one or two points, rather than just any that may happen to come up, and confine the discussion to these.

2. Select these points from matters of vital or primary importance; not minor or secondary issues.

3. Select points you are well familiar with, or upon which you will become well versed before entering into discussion.

4. Do not get side-tracked; hold the one you are conversing with strictly to the point and press home your strongest Scriptural arguments.

5. Try to get the one you are dealing with to see, and if possible to acknowledge, that your point has solid Scriptural basis, and that it cuts under the very foundation of their system.

6. Keep cool, always be courteous and winsome; do not throw slander or aspersions upon the opposing system; be much in prayer and trust God to guide you.

### Questions with Which to Confront Cultists

Do not ask a question which may be answered by a simple yes or no; make others express themselves on some point vital to the way of salvation. Examples:

1. What do you understand by the grace of God?—or—How does the grace of God operate in salvation? (If works or human effort come up, go to #4 in second main division above.)

2. How is atonement for sin made, and how complete or final is it? (The true basis: Eph. 1:7; Heb. 10:12, 14, 18; I Peter 2:24, 3:18)

3. Do you have complete forgiveness of sins now, and on what basis? (Eph. 1:7; Acts 13:38, 39; I John 1:9—emphasize "all").

## WATCHTOWER TEACHES YOUNGSTERS TO GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY IN COURT

When Jehovah's Witnesses go to court in a child custody case, they and their lawyers now turn for help to a new booklet of more than 60 pages, provided by the Watchtower Society.

Titled "Direct and Cross-Examination Questions in Child Custody Cases," the booklet prepares J.W. parents by listing dozens of "cross-examination questions that Witness parents could face" and even offers suggested responses under the heading, "Sample Approach by Witness Parent to Cross-Examination."

For Example, "Do you believe all Catholics (or other) will be destroyed?" Answer: "Jehovah makes those judgments, not we."

Several pages of questions for the lawyer to ask the non-Witness parent in court are also included. In addition, there are suggestions for elders called to testify, and for Witness young people brought in to show the court "that they are normal."

Here the booklet suggests that the youngsters be instructed to testify to the exact opposite of what they would say if speaking to a Witness audience:

"Be careful that they don't get the impression that they are in a demonstration at a circuit assembly, when they would show that the first things in life are service and going to the Kingdom Hall. Show hobbies, crafts, social activity, sports, and especially plans for the future. Be careful that they don't say that they are going to be pioneers. Plans can be trade, getting married and having children, journalism, and all kinds of other things. Maybe you can show an interest in art and the theatre," (p. 42).

The Society acknowledges that it is instructing them to say in court the opposite of what they would say "at a circuit assembly" to a Witness audience. The youngsters are always taught that field service and Kingdom Hall activities should be "the most important thing in their lives."—The Watchtower, April 1,

1979, page 14. Hobbies, crafts, social activities and sports are usually presented in a negative light. For example: "Witness parents encourage their children to use after-school hours principally to pursue spiritual interests, rather than to excel in some sport. Participation in organized sports, we believe, would expose Witness youths to unwholesome associations."—School and Jehovah's Witnesses, p. 23.

By instructing kids called to testify in court to say the opposite of what they are really taught to believe, the Watchtower Society is requiring them to engage in a form of double-talk that most people would consider lying.

And, unless the youngsters are to consciously see themselves as liars, they must also engage in double-think, the mental gymnastics described in George Orwell's novel "Nineteen Eighty-four," where people are formed by a totalitarian society "to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies"—1984, p. 32.

If a lawyer on a non-Witness side of a case wants to produce proof that Watchtower training harms children, all he need do is subpoena a copy of the Society's booklet on Child Custody and place it in evidence!

NOTE: The Watchtower Society seems to assume that even the worst Witness would make a better parent than the best non-Witness. Recognizing this as a prejudiced approach, COMMENTS FROM THE FRIENDS does not wish to promote the equally unbalanced view that the non-Witness parent is always the one who deserves custody. Some child custody cases are as difficult to decide as the one King Solomon settled at I Kings 3:16-28. "... I hate divorce, says Yahweh the God of Israel..." (Malachi 2:16, JB), and anyone observing a child custody battle can understand why. David A. Reed, Editor, Comments From The Friends, Vol. VII, Number 2, Spring 1988.

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**PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*John E. Dahlin, Editor*

**QUESTION . . .** Since the number identified with the Cults has now reached 20-million, according to reports, will their expansion continue, or will it likely increase?

**ANSWER . . .** No definite number can be provided, obviously, but since the cultic groups have expanded in number rapidly through the years that are passed, it is certain that they will continue to increase in the years which are ahead. They have adequate funds to support such expansion activities and many loyal followers who will carry on the work as ordered by their leaders.

**QUESTION . . .** What will favor their program of expansion?

**ANSWER . . .** The present ecumenical spirit within churchianity, as well as an expanding tolerance towards dissenters, favor the cults. Past opposition to the activities of the cults is no longer maintained by the mainline denominations. I see nothing to slow-down the expansion of the cults, especially when the Biblical doctrines are compromised as we find the situation today; and, in addition, our country has freedom of religion constitutionally protected.