

The DISCERNER

"HEREBY KNOW WE THE SPIRIT OF
TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR"

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EDITORIAL

by *William A. BeVier*

In the past two issues of *The Discerner* I devoted editorials to a presentation of Mormonism and Seventh Day Adventism.

For this issue I asked a friend of mine, Steve Lagoon, to write an article about the Jehovah's Witnesses. For several years Steve has made a conscious effort to reach these people for Christ, with some good results. His article is based both upon his studies of this cult and his experiences with those in it. I trust you will read his article with care.

By now all on our mailing list should have received a copy of our new 1993-

1994 Catalog. I hope you like the new format and will take the opportunity to carefully read this new issue and order from it frequently. Several new publications are included.

I again request that you please remember to pray for Religion Analysis Service daily and contribute to this ministry financially as you are able. Satan appears to be more aggressively attacking all Bible-believing ministries who are doing something effectively for the cause of Jesus Christ. Religion Analysis Service is not exempt from these attacks.

MYTHS INVOLVING THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

By *Steve Lagoon*

I've been involved in an outreach to Jehovah's Witnesses for a number of years, and in that time, I've become aware of a number of myths involving Jehovah's Witnesses.

I feel it is important for Christians to be as accurate and truthful as possible (Ephesians 4:15, 25), and so I am writing this article in the hope that it will help save precious time and trouble for those who may be involved with the Witnesses. I will begin by examining the myths that I've heard

about Jehovah's Witnesses. Let us proceed.

Myth #1. The Jehovah's Witnesses are polytheist, believing in both a big God, Jehovah, and a little God, Jesus Christ. This is simply not true. Jehovah's Witnesses are definitely not polytheist, but are absolutely monotheist, believing in Jehovah the Father who is the one true God and in his son, Jesus Christ, who is not God in any way at all. Then how did this myth arise?

Many Christian apologists, such as the late Dr. Walter Martin and Duane Magnani, have taught that there are only two kinds of God(s) in the Bible, either true or false, and since Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe Jesus to be a false God, they conclude that the Witnesses believe him to be a true God and, therefore, have two Gods. But is this fair? The Witnesses' explanation is that there is another category for the use of God in Scripture, that is there are certain ones who are not the almighty God who are called God and yet are not false Gods either. They are rather "God" in the sense that they represent God to others. They point to Psalm 82:1-6 and John 10:34 to show that human Judges were called "Gods" and also to Exodus 7:1 and 4:16 where Moses is as God to the people. Their logic is flawed on this, but they continue to maintain that Jesus is not really God in any way. You may not agree with their reasoning (I sure disagree), but it is unfair to characterize or accuse them of being polytheists. That would be unfair and inaccurate.

Myth #2. Jehovah's Witnesses are pacifist and refuse to pay taxes. This is not true. Today they refer to their stand as neutrality, not pacifism; that is, they are not against the use of force or even killing, rather they seek to maintain strict neutrality in the world's affairs, not taking sides or serving any government. Their view then becomes a modified form of the just war theory of warfare. For them, the only just cause is a war Jehovah Himself mandates, such as the wars of Israel in the Old Testament or Armageddon of the future. They are not against self-defense on a personal level and are allowed to even kill if necessary in self-defense at night. Many Witnesses are not aware that this is their teaching. Originally, the

Watchtower Society's position was opposite of what it is today in that from 1879 through World War I, they were pacifists, but were willing to serve in the government and the military, but just not kill. They were even encouraged to buy United States war bonds during World War I, something most Witnesses are not aware of today.

As to paying taxes, the Witnesses do pay them, and I am not aware of any time in their history when they were unwilling to pay taxes.

Myth #3. Jehovah's Witnesses will not accept blood for any reason. While it's true that they will not accept whole blood transfusions, they started to relax their stand mainly in response to the serious needs of hemophiliac Witnesses back in the middle 1970s, and now Witnesses are allowed to have all the component parts of blood plasma, including albumin, globulins, fibrinogen, etc. Interestingly, Witnesses are not allowed to receive plasma, but if it is broken down into its component parts, they are allowed to receive it. This is just one example of their ridiculous and harmful stand on blood.

Myth #4. The Watchtower Society claims to be an inspired prophet with continuing revelations. The Watchtower has said throughout its history that it is not inspired, and yet it has always expected Jehovah's Witnesses to accept everything it teaches as the final word from Jehovah and not be questioned. As has been said many times and is worth repeating, the governing body has always enjoyed all the privileges of prophets or apostles without any of the responsibilities. So, technically, though they do not claim to be inspired prophets, in practice that is just what they are to the millions of

Jehovah's Witnesses around the world.

Myth #5. Jehovah's Witnesses are super-zealots living exemplary Christian lives. It may appear that this is the case, but upon closer inspection, we see a different perspective. The foremost reason for their super-zealot reputation is the active door-to-door ministry. Many are impressed by their willingness to spend so much time in their mission work. But what are their motives? Mainly they are fear and guilt. You see, Witnesses believe only members in good standing will survive the soon-coming destruction of Armageddon, and the main way to be in good standing is to turn in your monthly time card reporting your door-to-door service. So, fear is the motivation and so are guilt and shame as Jehovah's Witnesses are constantly being reprimanded, pushed and guilted to do more and more (they'll never do enough). Furthermore, a Witness who is not active is labeled as a "bad association" and is shunned by other Witnesses. So we see that while some Witnesses are motivated by a sincere belief in their mission, many are motivated by fear and guilt. The tight control the organization holds over its members helps bring about conformity in moral standards. But it should be known, Jehovah's Witnesses struggle with all the same moral issues and family problems we all do.

Myth #6. Jehovah's Witnesses beat and abuse their children. A former Jehovah's Witness once appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show and made this allegation. He even said that you can look into the window of any kingdom hall during their meetings and you will see them abusing their children.

Now in my opinion, that is a ridiculous charge. I've been to scores of Watchtower meetings and am acquainted with many Jehovah's Witnesses personally, and I know that child abuse is neither tolerated nor condoned on an organizational level. In fact, the Watchtower Society works hard to promote strong Biblical family values. So while there may be occurrences of abuse now and then, overall their record would be no worse than any other religious group in this area.

I should say, however, that the life of a child in the organization can be painful and difficult. During their five hours of weekly meetings, Jehovah's Witnesses children are expected to remain seated and quiet, even though the meetings are geared for adults. Beginning at a very young age, say five or six, Witness children are pushed into door-to-door service and other activities. The leadership of the kingdom hall will use the same guilt, shame and pressure tactics on the children as they do on the adults. To get them to do more and more and more. Remember, when you are a Witness, no matter how much you do, you should have done more and you'll never ever do enough. If this weren't difficult enough, Witness children are taught to play only with other Witness children, are not allowed to celebrate their birthday (or anyone else's) or most holiday's and must be excused from the school classroom whenever this occurs. Neither can a Witness adult or child salute the flag or do the pledge of allegiance. And if the Witness child is injured and needs lifesaving blood therapy, the child needn't worry, his "loving" parents will make sure he won't receive the help he needs. Despite all this, however, I do believe most Witness parents do all they can to provide happy upbringings for their children.

Myth #7. People who join Jehovah's Witnesses or other cults are either not sincere or are the gullible and unintelligent members of society. Having personally met and spoken with hundreds of cult members for thousands of hours, it is my opinion that this is a myth. Members of cults represent a rather complete cross section of society as a whole, including some very bright, highly educated and successful people. Most people join a cult because of a lack of truthful information about the group rather than because they are unintelligent. This is why it is important for us as Christians to get the right information to the cultist so he can make an informed decision.

Also, most cult members are sincere; however, there are those who are on power trips and ego trips of which we should be aware.

We've looked at myths that others believe about Jehovah's Witnesses, so now let us look at myths they themselves believe about themselves and others.

Myth #8. The doctrine of the Trinity is unbiblical, irrational and of pagan origin. As to the doctrine being unbiblical, I believe they come to this conclusion because they fail to observe the proper method of scriptural interpretation, that is the normal, historical, grammatical and literal approach, and to the extent that one deviates from this method of interpretation, he is in danger of deviating from doctrinal orthodoxy.

The Bible is clear on the doctrine of the Trinity in that there is only one God (Deut. 6:4; I Tim. 2:5) and yet there are three distinct persons, each who is God. These are called the Father (I Cor. 8:5), The Son (John 1:1; 20:26; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8-12), and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; Rom. 8:26-27;

Acts 15:28), and these three are the one triune God. As to the Trinity being irrational. I disagree. It may be hard for some to understand, but that doesn't make it irrational. I can't understand how light or electricity works, but I don't deny their existence because of that (Isa. 55:8-9). To bring this point home to a Witness, I usually quote to them from their own book called, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1985, pg. 148-149: "Is that reasonable? Our mind's cannot fully comprehend it. But that is not a sound reason for rejecting it.... Should we really expect to understand everything about a person who is so great that he could bring into existence the universe...."

As to the Trinity being of pagan origin, nonsense. While certain writers used the loaded language and culture of their day (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, etc.) to describe their understanding of Scripture, that doesn't mean that their doctrine originated in paganism anymore than the Watchtower Society's doctrine of today owes its origin to the secular, humanistic, existential and rationalistic philosophy of our century (though that may be the case). Actually, the Watchtower's doctrine in the area of Christology is very similar to Arius, the heretic of the fourth century, whose doctrine was heavily influenced and similar to Platonic philosophy.

Myth #9 Jehovah's Witnesses are the only ones who really accept and follow the Bible. Believe it or not, most Jehovah's Witnesses following what their literature tells them actually believe this. Their whole idea Christianity is based on the worst extremes of liberal Christianity. They are convinced that "Christendom's" (their name for us) doctrine comes from tradition and philosophy,

whereas they alone follow the Bible. In actuality, Jehovah's Witnesses' final authority is not the Bible, but the governing body in New York and the literature they produce.

Myth #10. Jehovah's Witnesses are the only ones who truly proselytize. Witnesses have been taught and are convinced that door-to-door witnessing is the main way to go about fulfilling the great commission and look down on Christians as being unwilling to perform this Biblical mandate. They have no idea how much mission work is done by Christianity and that there are other methods of proselytizing besides door-to-door work of which these are too numerous to list.

Myth #11 The Jehovah's Witness organization alone is pure and free from pagan influence following the Bible only. Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate most holidays such as Christmas and Easter, etc. and the reason given is that the ancient origin of these holidays had pagan influence and connection, and anything to do with paganism should not be participated in by Christians. They are correct in noting the pagan influence on some of our holiday customs, but they fail to realize that things change in time and that most of our holiday customs today do not retain the same meaning and significance today that they held in ancient times and, therefore, should not necessarily present a problem to a Christian.

Amazingly, the Watchtower Society is not consistent on this point because in an article in the Watchtower magazine of January 15, 1972, page 63, they discuss the pagan origin of things like the wedding ring, certain clothing customs, the modern division of time into hours and minutes, etc., and tell their readers that it is perfectly okay to participate in these things because, while they had pagan connections in their origin, they do not retain these meanings today. Their argument in this 1972 article is correct, but absolutely undermines and contradicts their logic for not celebrating holidays. What a difficult thing it is to be a Jehovah's Witness, having to believe and defend contradictory and opposite things at the same time. In the book entitled, How Did It Begin? by R. Brasch, Pocketbooks 1969, there are hundreds of other items of daily life that also have a pagan origin which Witnesses do all the time. Also, as to the condemning of others for celebrating holidays, the Witnesses would do well to follow Paul's advice in Col. 2:16 and Rom. 14:1-5.

My hope is that this article has been informative and will help save time wasted clearing up misunderstandings so that those who will be speaking with Jehovah's Witnesses will have as fruitful a time as possible to the glory of God.

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS VITALIZE MASONRY

By Leslie E. Buege

On June 16, 1993, the Southern Baptist passed a resolution at their annual convention that the Masons are claiming as a major victory for them. I would like to report from

their own writings what they had to say about the passing of this important resolution. But, first I'll review the resolution voted on and some of the controversy that occurred

leading up to the 1993 convention.

Last year, the Southern Baptist passed a motion at their annual Convention to study Freemasonry and its compatibility with Christianity. This is the motion that was passed:

The Southern Baptist Convention in annual session June 9-11, 1992, at Indianapolis, Indiana, directs the Interfaith Witness Department of the Home Mission Board to study the compatibility with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine of the organization known variously as the Masonic Lodge, Masonry, Freemasonry, and/or Ancient Accepted Rite [sic] of Freemasonry. The study is to encompass any and all branches and/or Lodges thereof. Furthermore, the Convention charges the Home Mission Board with the responsibility of bringing a report with recommendation to the Convention which is to meet in Houston, Texas June 1993 (qtd. in Ankerberg 74).

The Interfaith Witness Department compiled a 107-page analysis of their study, which was eventually reduced to a 75-page report entitled *A Study of Freemasonry* (1993). This report was given to the Home Mission Board with the recommendation that they advance the position that membership in Freemasonry "be left with the judgment of the individual." The Home Mission Board then prepared their own 6-page summary report ("A Report on Freemasonry," March 17, 1993) that ended with the following recommendation and resolution that was presented at the 1993 Southern Baptists Convention held in June:

In light of the fact that many tenants and teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptists

doctrine, while others are compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptists doctrine, we therefore recommend that consistent with our denomination's deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience. Therefore, we exhort Southern Baptists to prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scriptures, and the findings of this report, as led by the Holy Spirit of God (qtd. in Ankerberg 9).

Despite the fact the Home Mission Boards 6-page Summary Report listed many reasons why it is wrong for a Christian to be a member of the Masonic Lodge, they concluded that "membership in a Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience." This is an illogical and shocking conclusion that contradicts warnings within the report (Ankerberg 10). For example the report said, "Even though these oaths, obligations and rituals may or may not be taken seriously by the initiate, it is *inappropriate* for a Christian to 'sincerely promise and swear,' with the hand on the Holy Bible, any such promises or oaths, or to *participate* in any such pagan rituals" (qtd. in Ankerberg 9).

The Report also concluded that the Masonic writings and rituals implied that salvation may be attained by one's good works. It further states that the heresy of Universalism (the belief that all people will eventually be saved) permeates the writings of many authors and is a doctrine that is inconsistent with New Testament teaching (Ankerberg 24).

One must therefore ask the question, "How could the Interfaith Witness

Department Study and the Home Mission Board Report conclude as they did after presenting strong evidence *against* Freemasonry?" It appears that deceptive practices, a Masonic agenda and biased scholarship contributed to the contradictions. For example, it was reported that Dr. Gary Leazer (one of the staff members with the Home Mission Board who was assigned to be Director of the Interfaith Witness Department Committee and given the responsibility of preparing a study on Masonry) allowed Masons to read and critique his committee's study and then accepted their suggestions for changes. He would not, however, allow Christians opposed to Freemasonry to even read the study (Ankerberg 10-11).

Also, Dr. Gary Leazer was asked by John Boettjer, the journal editor, to read the proof of the February issue of *The Scottish Rite Journal* which he did in December. This issue was devoted to arguing that the Masonic Lodge is compatible with Christianity and was sent to 5000 Southern Baptist leaders before the 1993 Convention (Ankerberg 11).

From an article in the June 1993 issue of *The Scottish Rite Journal* entitled: "The Southern Baptists Convention's Study of Freemasonry," come some interesting findings. The writer says that "the final [6-page Summary] report vindicates Freemasonry from the charge of being a religion or of being anti-Christian." The writer then goes on and recommends the 75-page study as a "'must reading' for every Freemason concerned about Freemasonry's relation to religion." Details for ordering are provided with an urgent appeal to read it before the Convention votes on the resolution ("Southern" 47).

It may be worth noting at this point, that the Interfaith Witness Department Study also acknowledged "an estimated 400,000-500,000 Southern Baptist men are Masons. Among this number are many well-known Southern Baptist leaders....[e.g.,] Every president of Baylor University has been a Master Mason" (qtd. in Ankerberg 56).

The Study also documented that Masonry has been rejected by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church in America, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Church of Nazarene, the Church of the Brethren, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Assemblies of God, the Reformed Presbyterian Church "and other Christian denominations have also taken positions against Freemasonry, or against secret societies without mentioning Freemasonry." The study even conceded that "this issue has divided Baptists for two centuries." (Ankerberg 56).

Incidentally, the title for my article was suggested by the title of an article that appeared in the August 1993 issue of *The Scottish Rite Journal*, "an official publication of The Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Southern Jurisdiction, United States of America." The title of the article reads: "Baptist Vote Vitalizes Masonry." In the article it states that the Southern Baptist spent \$111,000 on a study of Freemasonry, more than it has spent on any other study undertaken by the Board ("Baptist" 35). The writer goes on and quotes the Home Mission Board's President, Dr. Larry L. Lewis, as saying that the result is an "accurate, fair report and recommendation that I believe most

Baptists would want to live with. I don't think most Baptists want us to condemn Freemasonry. We don't win people to Christ by condemning them. With the world all around us lost and going to hell, I'm sure the large expenditure of time and resources on this issue was justified." ("Baptist" 35).

Dr. Lewis was reported to have said at a news conference immediately following the vote that he estimated that the resolution passed with about 80% in favor of the Board's report/recommendation ("Baptist" 36).

(Dr. Lewis had been asked by the John Ankerberg staff to come and explain to them how the Home Mission Board could issue a resolution that seemed to contradict the results of the study and why he was cited in *The Atlanta Constitution* as saying that the issue of Freemasonry was so unimportant it probably should never have been raised in the first place. But Dr. Lewis declined the invitation.) (Ankerberg 12).

The writer goes on to congratulate the Brothers and says, "Because of your support, the vote of the Southern Baptist Convention is a historic and positive turning point for Freemasonry. Basically, it is a vitalization of our Fraternity by America's largest Protestant denomination after nearly a year of thorough, scholarly study. At the same time, it is a call to renewed effort on the part of all Freemasons today to re-energize our Fraternity and move forward to fulfilling its mission as the world's foremost proponent of Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God." ("Baptist" 36-37).

And in another article from the same issue, entitled, "I Heard The Music Again, The Southern Baptist

Convention, A Personal Response" come these opening words: "Tolerance won, Bigotry lost." The author tells of his experience at the Convention. "Every time an anti-Masonic sentiment was voiced by some speaker, it was greeted by a roar of applause. Pro-Masonic sentiments were received with a silence like that of the tomb." He goes on to tell of an encounter between a minister and a Mason in the hall. The Mason was asked "if he had prayed to know God's will about his Masonic membership." The Mason told him "he had when he become a Mason. The minister told him he needed to pray about it again." (Tresner 28-29) (A Mormon will also tell you to do this in order to find the will of God regarding you becoming a Mormon.)

The writer then describes the debate the next day. "Then a man arises and speaks common sense. 'Why are we fighting this? We have much to do, we have souls to save. Let us put this behind us.' They cheer him, and cheer him! And they vote to adopt the report. And something I didn't even know was tight inside lets loose." (Tresner 31).

"And I got my faith back. 'Surely, Lord,' I had prayed, 'surely nearly 18,000 people will not vote to hate. Surely we have learned something from the Inquisition and from Auschwitz. Surely they cannot believe that You are served by suspicion and distrust and prejudice and bigotry.' And they didn't." (Tresner 31).

Another article in this same issue is entitled "SOUL COMPETENCE and the Southern Baptist Convention." The writer rightfully calls it a "historic vote of the Southern Baptist Convention" (Kleinknecht 3). He says "no Mason must remain unaware of this significant turning point for

modern Freemasonry. After nearly a year of careful, scholarly study, America's largest Protestant denomination (over 15 million members) has officially declared membership in Freemasonry must remain what it has always been, 'a matter of personal conscience'" (3).

Then he tells how the Masons responded to the "virulent attacks on our gentle Craft" occurring over the past year. He says that "the February and May issues of *The Scottish Rite Journal* were dedicated to over 50 quietly reasoned, authoritative responses" (to the attacks) and "many articles were by noted clergymen who are also Masons and Southern Baptists" (Kleinknecht 3-4).

In reference to the Convention, he says that "one thing stood out loud and clear: only personal conscience, not church authority, should be the guide to membership in Freemasonry. Dr. Brad Allen, chairman of the directors of the Home Mission Board, put the issue squarely to the Convention. Opposing an amendment to brand Masonic teachings as a 'mixture of paganism and Christianity,' Allen asserted such an anti-Masonic amendment would 'strike two of the dearest things to the Baptist heart,' the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church. He continued saying, 'If we can't trust the soul competence of the believer in Jesus Christ to do the right thing, we're sunk'" (Kleinknecht 5).

The writer then says, "Appropriately, the anti-Masonic amendment did not pass and the Southern Baptist Convention did not 'sink.' Rather, it joined Freemasonry in its elevation of individual conscience as the final guide to personal belief and actions. Freemasonry, while emphatically not a religion, fully supports this spiritual

'soul competence,' this right of every person to exercise his God-given right to freedom of thought and will." (Kleinknecht 5)

Returning again to the 75-page study done by the Interfaith Witness Department, they admitted that "Freemasonry today does not see Jesus as the unique Son of God and Saviour of the World" (qtd. in Ankerberg 33).

I believe the necessity of the Masons ignoring this teaching is easy to understand when you consider that there are Muslim Masons for whom the idea of Christ's deity is blasphemous, and there are Buddhists Masons who abhor the biblical teaching of the atonement, and many other Masons who would most certainly be offended if the person and work of Jesus Christ were revealed in their writings and Rituals.

Any religious teaching that ignores the person and work of Jesus Christ, denies the true God. The Bible is clear on this teaching.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6).

"...but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17b).

"But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is heaven" (Matt. 10:33).

Apart from Jesus Christ, no one can know the true and only God, and there is no true salvation message apart from Jesus Christ.

The Masonic Deity is called the "Great Architect Of The Universe" (or G.A.O.T.U.). A Mason hopes that one day he will gain approval of the

G.A.O.T.U. and be admitted into the Celestial Lodge Above by wearing the white apron given him in the first degree. This apron is "the badge of a Mason" and is a symbol of the "purity of life and rectitude of conduct." Freemasonry has defined salvation through its writings and its Rituals as a virtuous life to be lived in accordance with Masonic principles. This is a clear teaching of salvation by good works and a threat to Christianity and it's message of Grace (Ankerberg 62).

Titus 3:5 says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy he saved us...."

I believe it would be ironic, if it weren't such a serious matter, that the Masons (because of their Universalism) deny that it was Jesus Christ who created the universe, thereby rejecting the real "Great Architect Of The Universe." (See Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; John 1:3).

I once shared this truth with a fellow worker who was a Mason. He was puzzled by this and asked how this could be true since the world was in existence at the time Jesus Christ was born.

The knowledge that I had about the Mason's god gave me the opportunity to tell him about Jesus Christ. I believe this is one of the practical benefits of studying the teachings of the more popular cults.

The following is a list of names of some well known men who are, or have been, Masons. I hope this list will illustrate how influential and widespread the organization of Freemasonry really is. These names were taken from the pages of a few issues of *The Scottish Rite Journal*:

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, John Wayne, Senator Jesse Helms, Senator Allen K. Simpson, President Harry S Truman, President Jimmy Carter, Barry Goldwater, Senator Sam J. Ervin, J. C. Penny, Senator Strom Thurmond, and even George Washington.

The next time you look at the picture "GRACE," a picture of "an elderly peddler with his head bowed in a meal-time prayer of thanksgiving" you will probably remember what you are about to learn. That picture was taken by a Mason named Eric Enstrom in his studio in the tiny mining town of Bovey, Minnesota, in the year 1918 ("Famous" 42). Stories like this are very common in the pages of *The Scottish Rite Journal*.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded them which believe not..." (II Cor 4:3-4).

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BIBLICAL HEALING

By Ewald Eisele

Much has been written of late about those who claim to have a "gift" of healing. This is certainly not a new thing and almost all Christians are aware of those who have made such claims. However not very much has appeared in print regarding what the Word of God has to say about this subject. I realize that in a short article such a vast subject can be only briefly considered.

One of the reasons for a consideration of this subject at this time is the recent media coverage of the case of the boy who died whose parents were Christian Scientists. As has been reported in the press, the estranged father was awarded a judgment in his suit against individuals and the Mother Church of the Christian Science religion. One of the foundation teachings of Christian Science is their denial of the physical aspects of mankind. Man is not made of matter but is spiritual and therefore perfect. Since man is not material there is nothing in man to fail, no possibility of his "body" to get sick. They teach that disease cannot exist and is, when so-called disease is mentioned, simply a mental illusion.

Naturally, when a member of that church becomes ill he or she would not go to a doctor but rely on their "practitioner," the so-called "healers" to pray and so alleviate the pain and symptoms of the mental problem the individual is having. They also deny

the reality of death, but when one of them dies they bury the remains as all others do. Now here is the problem of the above mentioned case of the boy dying. Can the government regulate what a church truly believes is its spiritual duty? The case is being appealed and will probably go to the nation's highest court before a final decision is made.

All of that has to do with the subject at hand because a question was raised, in a Bible study class in which I am involved. The question had to do with the above case when it was asked: "If they were praying to God, as they believed, why did not God heal the boy?" Of course we cannot prove that they were or were not praying to God. My answer was that there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that God is bound to answer the prayer of a non-Christian. Of course God will answer the prayer of a sinner if it is one of confession, repentance and asking for forgiveness and salvation.

If the Christian Science Church was really a Christian church it would be different, but it is not. God does answer the prayer of one of His own and that is what we would like to consider.

There are three portions of Scripture that have something important to say regarding healing and I would like to call your attention to them. These are familiar passages: Matt. 8:16-17, Mark 6:12-13 and James 5:10-16. We

naturally would expect that the account of the Lord healing would differ from that of the disciples because He was God manifested in the flesh and used His divine power to heal. That which we should pay attention to is found in the accounts of healing done by His followers. I believe that they set the pattern which should be followed in this dispensation.

Notice that the accounts in Mark and James have some differences that show us that the Lord is not confined to only one pattern. In James the anointing oil is joined with prayer but no prayer is recorded in Mark, only the miraculous gift. Probably the most important thing to note is that in James the ones sent to minister to the sick brother or sister were not specially gifted "healers," but the elders, the common officers of the church. There is nothing mentioned that any one of them had a special gift of healing. I believe that this is a strong indication that this particular ministry is a local church function and should be carried out only in a local church situation. Also this seems to indicate that this ministry is confined to the members of the local church and usually not to the general public.

Other examples of healing in the New Testament do not necessarily involve the use of oil and prayer. If they were used it is not mentioned. Cures were brought about by:

Touch - Acts 3:7 by Peter and John.

Shadow - Acts 5:15 by that of Peter.

Word of mouth - Acts 9:34 Peter to Aeneas.

Handkerchiefs - Acts 19:12 brought to Paul.

Laying on of hands - Acts 28:8 by Paul on Publius.

No one, evidently, used this gift or the James 5 procedure indiscriminately. This is seen in the following accounts:

Paul left Trophimus at Miletim sick - 2 Tim. 4:20

Paul sorrowed concerning the illness of Epaproditus - Phil. 2:27

Paul pleaded for his thorn to be removed - 2 Cor. 12:7-10

Paul did heal - Acts 28:7-9. The father of Publius and many others.

The Bible says nothing regarding the use of means. Medicine, doctors, and other things and people are used without any comment. An example is the time Isaiah put a poltice on Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:7. Jesus used means when He healed the blind man of Bethsaida in Mark 8:22, and the blind man in John 9:6; using spittle, clay and the waters of Siloam. Paul prescribed "a little wine" for Timothy's stomach trouble.

But the Lord does not always heal which is plain in the Scripture: Paul and his thorn. Of course there is a reason. It certainly was not because of some sin, nor was it because of a lack of faith. No, with Paul, it was to teach him that God's grace was sufficient. God's will and glory were to be advanced further through the thorn and Paul's bearing it, than through its removal.

So, sickness may be a teacher, to give God more glory, to vindicate God (as in the case of Job), it may be corrective or it may be used by Him to lead an individual to Himself.

The question is often asked: "Is sickness the result of sin?" Yes, world-wide. No, individually. Sickness, along with all else that is not the way God created the world, is the result of the first sin committed by man.

Before Adam sinned there was no sin, sickness or death.

A related question is also asked: "Is there healing in the Atonement?" The Scripture usually quoted is Isa. 53:4-5, "Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

One must understand why Christ died. He died in order that man might be saved through accepting the salvation Christ paid for by shedding His blood. Not only that man might be saved, but that man might enjoy all the fruits of salvation. But we do not now receive all of that for which He died. He did in His death put away all of the results of sin including sickness, but physical healing is one of the things that is not necessarily received at this time. Some times illness is allowed to linger for some of the same reasons stated above in the case of Paul's thorn. It is wonderful to be saved and have our sins forgiven, but we all know that is only part of our inheritance. There is so much more that is not to be had in this life.

Paul pointed out that fact very clearly in several places. In that wonderful chapter, Romans eight, he wrote, in verses 20-21, that the world and creation groan waiting for deliverance. Then in verse 23 he talks about Christians: "And not only they but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

Then we read what he wrote in Phil. 3:20-21: "For our conversation is in

heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Paul certainly did not believe that there was physical healing, for this age, in the atonement. He certainly did believe that there would be that healing in our future life and home.

The portion in James 5 mentions the prayer of faith and in Matt. 9:29 Jesus tells the blind men, "According to your faith, be it unto you." True faith is one which rests on the sure Word of God. It generally has two elements: Expectation and submission. Faith involves genuine resignation to the will of God. Where there is not this resignation there can be no true expectation. Spiritual submission is spreading my case before the Lord and asking Him to deal with it as He sees best. If I count on His wisdom and goodness, that is the essence of faith. If I have that confidence that He will deal with the problem, that is the expectation of faith. The expectation, not that He will give what my carnal nature wants, but that He will give what is most for His glory and my highest good. Anything other than that is not faith but presumption.

James wrote and showed us the right way: "Is any sick among you let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." The anointing oil which is in Ex. 30:23-25 was made of spices: myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia and olive oil. It was not to be used for any common purpose. Oil, in the Word, is generally accepted as a symbol of the Holy Spirit and the anointing as a surrender of an ill person to the min-

istry of the Spirit. If it pleases the Lord to heal He will. If the illness is for a purpose of His choosing there may not be immediate healing but there will be given His peace and grace.

A service such as detailed in James is to be carried out at the request of the person who is ill. It does not involved any kind of "professional" healer or "practitioner" and is part of the ministry given into the hands of the local, Bible believing, church.

It probably goes without saying, but first and foremost the ministry of the church is to extend the body of Christ, the truly Christian Church. Since this is so, the ministry of the church is primarily to heal souls, not bodies. If one is a member of Christ's body, he has every right to call on the Elders of his church in time of need, no matter what the need may be. The Elders have a responsibility to deal with the problem, using the Word of God as the source of authority, following its directions and principles.

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