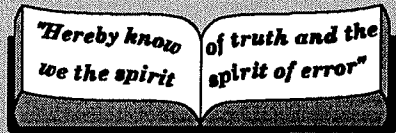


The Discerner



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AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

As most of you know we have published and mailed our 1995-96 Catalog. A copy was sent to each person on our general mailing list, which includes all subscribers to The Discerner. In the event you did not receive a copy of the new catalog or desire an additional copy, please let us know.

In this issue of The Discerner we are featuring another article by Berit Kjos in which she points out some of the deficiencies in "The Message," a new so-called "translation" of the Bible by Pastor Eugene Peterson. I believe students of the Bible will find this article to be interesting and relevant.

We welcome back to The Discerner a brother who has made many contributions to Religion Analysis Service both as a member of the Board and as a writer for this quarterly, Dr. David Larsen. Dr. Larsen is currently a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a member of R.A.S.'s Board of Reference. He also is the author of a new book on prophecy titled Jews, Gentiles, and the Church, published by Discovery House Publishers. If you have ever heard Dr. Larsen speak on prophecy or read anything he has written on the subject, you know his competence and love for the Word of God.

Another member of our Board of Reference, Dr. Roy E. Knuteson, has granted us permission to reprint in this issue of The

Discerner his "The Cult Within The Church" which he published earlier in tract form. Dr. Knuteson currently is pastoring in Fort Collins, Colorado.

As we usually attempt to do, we are presenting several book reviews in this issue. Two are by David A. Cook, a member of our Board. One review is of a book dealing with the issue of what is the "gospel" for the Roman Catholic Church (very relevant in view of current discussions and developing relationships between certain Evangelicals and certain Roman Catholics). His other review is of a new book presenting the Jehovah's Witnesses ever changing views on medicine and especially blood transfusions. We stock this book by Steve DeVore and Steve Lagoon.

Our third review is of a new book by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie titled Dispensationalism. The reviewer is Dr. Robert D. Huff, a retired pastor now residing in Illinois. Dr. Ryrie has written in the past on this subject and also has taught in this area of theology for many years. In view of the current discussions and disputes on this subject, every concerned Christian should read this book. We also stock this book.

To give you a brief report on our exhibit at the North American Christian Convention at the Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis, Indiana in July, we had an excellent spot,

good help from the exhibit hall crew, met many nice people, gave out almost 500 catalogs, sold a lot of literature, and had a lot of good experiences and exposure.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the one who made it possible, Mr. James Payne. The sad

news is that Mr. Payne did not get to see the fruit of his labor, but the good news is, he is at home with the Lord. James Payne died the week after the convention. He had been responsible for our having exposure at conventions for a number of years and we are eternally grateful.

WHAT KIND OF MESSAGE IS "THE MESSAGE"?

By Berit Kjos

The Message deletes the reference to God's holy name and adds a request not voiced by Jesus:

Matthew 6:9: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..."

The Message: "Our Father in heaven, Reveal who you are."

The Message distorts the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son:

John 10:30: "I and the Father are one."

The Message: "I and the Father are one heart and mind."

John 14:28: "...The Father is greater than I."

The Message: "The Father is the goal and purpose of my life."

Riding a spreading tide of publicity and enthusiasm, Eugene Peterson's The Message is sweeping into Christian bookstores, homes and churches from coast to coast. In the first four months after its mid-July 1994 release, 100,000 copies of this "New Testament in contemporary English" were printed by NavPress. Seventy thousand books were sold. Thousands were either donated or distributed at reduced prices to youth leaders, Young Life staff, and pastors who could share Peterson's message with their followers. Apparently, most readers were delighted. "The Message is so good it leaves me breathless," writes popular author Madeleine L'Engle¹ in her endorsement.

Considering this ground-swell of acceptance, we do well to ponder the question: What is Peterson's Message?

"The Message is the boldest and most provocative rendering of the New Testament I've ever read," writes Dr. Warren W. Wiersbe, former general director of "Back to the Bible" broadcast and former pastor of Moody Memorial Church. "The Message is certainly destined to become a devotional classic—not to mention a powerful pastoral tool," adds pastor Jack W. Hayford.

What does Eugene Peterson himself say? In his introduction to The Message, he tells us that "This version of the New Testament in a contemporary idiom keeps the language

of the Message current and fresh and understandable in the same language in which we do our shopping, talk with our friends, worry about world affairs, and teach our children their table manners....”

This sounds like a good idea, but what if essential Biblical concepts are not part of our everyday conversation? Should we then rewrite God’s holy Scriptures to fit our more shallow and worldly communications?

Remember, we are dealing with God’s holy unchangeable Word—not an ordinary book. God owns His message, we don’t. Only His own, well-guarded words can be presented as absolute truth. Yet, readers who trust NavPress and endorsers like Warren Wiersbe and J. I. Packer view this book as an **authentic translation** of the Bible, rather than as Peterson’s **personal interpretation**.

Throughout both Old and New Testaments, God forbids us to distort His Word. Additions and deletions are strictly forbidden in Scriptures like Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:8-9 and Revelation 22:19. Acts 17:11 exhorts us to learn from the Bereans who “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Eugene Peterson would probably agree. His own interpretation of 2 Corinthians 4:2 holds him accountable to this timeless standard: “We don’t maneuver and manipulate behind the scenes. And we don’t twist God’s Word to suit ourselves. Rather we keep everything we do and say out in the open, the whole truth on display, so that those who want to can see and judge for themselves in the presence of God.”

While the above verse corresponds to the original Greek, many other passages do just what The Message promises *not* to do: they “twist God’s Word to suit” human inclinations. In fact, the very next sentence (verse 3), fails the test. It does not “keep...the whole truth on display.”

Instead, it deletes the original references both to “those who are perishing” and to the glory of “Christ, who is the image of God.”

It doesn’t take a Greek scholar to recognize the appalling distortions of God’s holy Word. Any Bible student willing to compare Peterson’s Message with a Greek/English Lexicon and take time to look up key words in a credible New Testament Bible dictionary will discover alarming deletions, distortions and additions to the original text. If Peterson is right, then all our other Bibles—the KJV, NASV, NIV, Greek-English interlinear Bibles—are false.

See for yourself. The following Scriptures compare The Message with the NIV—the most common of today’s “authoritative” Bibles. To emphasize differences, corresponding words and phrases are underlined. Please pray for discernment as you check the following additions and deletions:

DELETES words that imply occult spirituality, SUBSTITUTES more finite, human influences:

1 Timothy 4:1: “...in later times some will abandon the faith and follow seducing spirits and doctrines of demons.” (KJV)

The Message: “...as time goes on, some are going to give up the faith and chase after demonic illusions put forth by professional liars.”

[We’re not just dealing with illusions. Deceiving spirits and the timeless doctrines of demons are far more effective in deceiving people than illusions and professional liars.]

DELETES reference to “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” and “sinful nature:”

Ephesians 2:1-3: “As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you

followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature² and following its desires and thoughts.”

The Message: “It wasn’t so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn’t know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat.”

MINIMIZES occult dangers, DELETES consequences:

2 Thessalonians 2:9: “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved.”

The Message: “The Anarchist’s³ coming is all Satan’s work. All his power and signs and miracles are fake, evil sleight of hand that plays to the gallery of those who hate the truth that could save them. And since they’re so obsessed with evil, God rubs their noses in it—gives them what they want. Since they refuse to trust truth, they’re banished to their chosen world of lies and illusions.”

[Peterson’s tendency to delete the supernatural and minimize the consequences of sin reminds me of Romans 1:18—“The wrath of God is being revealed...against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who **suppress the truth...**”]

DELETES references to sinful nature and occult practices, minimizing Satan’s power:

Galatians 5:19-21: “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

The Message: “It is obvious what kind of life develops out of trying to get your own way all the time: repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religions; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved.... ugly parodies of community. I could go on.”

[Idolatry and witchcraft are **not** the same as trinket gods and magic-show religions! We’re dealing with spiritual forces far greater than magical illusions.]

ADDS horoscope, as if this timeless tool of occultism is similar to a telescope:

Colossians 2:10: “...and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

The Message: “You don’t need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope [emphasis mine] to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him...”

DELETES words like adulterers and homosexual which identify specific sins, ADDS a politically correct reference to environmentalism (recall the environmental terminology in Ephesians 2:13, “filled your lungs with polluted unbelief...”):

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male

prostitutes nor homosexual offenders [sodomites] nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified..."

The Message: "Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it [emphasis mine] don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up and given a fresh start...."

[Ed. See meaning's for Greek words porneia and moicheia in a Greek lexicon and note the differences: Both are used in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 18; Hebrews 13:4; etc. Much inconsistency among translators of these words.]

DELETES reference to obedience and to the grace of our Lord:

Romans 16:19-21: "Everyone has heard about your obedience [the Greek word consistently refers to obedience or obeying]⁴, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of Peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you."

The Message: "And so while there has never been any question about your honesty in this matters—I couldn't be more proud of you!—I want you also to be smart, making sure every "good" thing is the *real* thing. Don't be gullible in regard to smooth-talking evil. Stay alert like this, and before you know it the God of peace will come down on Satan with both feet, stomping him into the dirt. Enjoy the best of Jesus!"

DELETES "sexual immorality," ADDS "avoids commitment and intimacy:"

I Corinthians 6:18-20: "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

The Message: "There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much a spiritual mystery as a physical fact. As written in Scripture, "The two become one." Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever—the kind of sex that can never "become one."In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for "becoming one" with another."⁵

[One could conclude that "commitment and intimacy" or "becoming one," not marriage, set the boundaries for acceptable sex.]

ADDS words that qualify homosexuality, providing a loophole for committed homosexuals who "love" each other, DELETES "God gave them over...":

Romans 1:26-27: "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversions."

The Message: "Worse followed. Refusing to know God, they soon didn't know how to be human either—women didn't know how to be women, men didn't know how to be men. Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women, men with men—all lust, no love. And then they

paid for it, oh, how they paid for it—emptied of God and love, Godless and loveless wretches.”

[This strange wording leaves a loophole for homosexuality to be permitted if it was an expression of love, not lust—which many gay couples claim today. In other words, lust becomes the sin, not the choice of a same-sex partner. The consequences of disobedience, “due penalty” seems broader than “emptied of God and love....” Historically it includes sexually transmitted diseases as well as spiritual death. That politically incorrect possibility is deleted here.]

DISTORTS truth with a contemporary bias:

Romans 3:19-20. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law, rather through the law we become conscious of sin.”

The Message: “This makes it clear, doesn’t it, that whatever is written in these Scriptures is not what God says about others but to us to whom these Scriptures were addressed in the first place! and it’s clear enough, isn’t it, that we’re sinners, every one of us, in the same sinking boat with everyone else? Our involvement with God’s revelation doesn’t put us right with God. What it does is force us to face our complicity in everyone else’s sin.”

[This interpretation endorses today’s false standard of tolerance: Don’t expose or criticize another person; just deal with your own sin. It defies God’s guidelines concerning counseling, correction, restoration and accountability—and supports today’s tendency to condone sin. See Roman 1:32—but not in The Message. It deletes this important point.]

DELETES “spiritual”—spiritual readiness to receive God’s resources for ministry,⁶ SUBSTITUTES “live creatively,” usually a reference to human resources, not God’s:

Galatians 6:1-2: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.”

The Message: “Live creatively, friends. If someone falls into sin, forgivingly restore him, saving your critical comments for yourself. *You* might be needing forgiveness before the day’s out.”

DELETES references to submission, ADDS marital equality:

1 Peter 3:1,7: “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands.... Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life...”

The Message: “The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs.... The same goes for you husbands: Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them. As women they lack some of your advantages. But in the new life of God’s grace, you’re equals. Treat your wives, then, as equals....”

DELETES references to sexual immorality, repentance, tolerating sin, the God who searches hearts and minds....

Revelation 2:20-23: “I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling, so I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.”

I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds....”

The Message: “But why do you let that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet mislead my dear servants into Cross-denying, self-indulging religion? I gave her a chance to change her ways, but she has no intention of giving up a career in the god-business. I’m about to lay her low, along with her partners, as they play their sex-and-religion games. The bastard offspring of their idol-whoring I’ll kill. Then every church will know that appearances don’t impress me.”

MISLEADING emphasis:

Romans 15:4-5: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God...”

The Message: “Even if it was written in Scripture long ago, you can be sure it’s written for us. God wants the combination of his steady, constant calling and warm, personal counsel in Scripture to come to characterize us, keeping us alert for whatever he will do next. May our dependably steady and warmly personal God develop maturity in you so that you get along with each other as well as Jesus gets along with us all. Then we’ll be a choir...our very lives singing in harmony in a sunning anthem to the God...”

[No mention of **endurance and hope**—which implies triumph in the midst of suffering, as we remain confident that God will do all He has promised. In light of Peterson’s tendency to minimize the disciplining side of God, his emphasis on a **warm, feel-good** God seems to distort

God’s revelation of Himself. Notice, “follow Christ Jesus” replaced by a Jesus to “gets along with us.”]

REPLACES “reconciliation” (a spiritual work based on the cross) with “friend.”
ADDS “drop their differences” (Could he be promoting a PC form of unity?):

2 Corinthians 5:20: “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”

The Message: “We’re Christ’s representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right between them. We’re speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he’s already a friend with you.”

ADDS a promise not found in the original Greek:

Romans 8:35-37: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?”

The Message: “Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ’s love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:”

This last passage seems consistent with Peterson’s refusal to mention those “worst sins” in the various New Testament lists of fleshly expressions. It also helps explain his commendation of medieval mystic **Julian of Norwich**, whose teachings—often quoted by controversial priest Matthew Fox, founder of *Creation Spirituality*—fueled the fourteenth-century flowering of pantheistic mysticism. In his article titled “Spirit Quest”⁷⁷ (*Christianity Today*,

11-8-93), Peterson wrote, “Single-minded, persevering faithfulness confirms the authenticity of our spirituality. The ancestors we look to for encouragement in this business—Augustine of Hippo and Julian of Norwich, John Calvin.... Teresa of Avila—didn’t flit. They *stayed*.”

Since Julian of Norwich is a spiritual model to the man who has interpreted God’s Word for today, let’s take a look at what she believed. Indeed, her teachings seem to echo some of the cultural biases that thread through The Message. They also fit today’s uncritical search for experiential, feeling-centered spirituality. In his book, *Soul Friend*, Kenneth Leech describes some of her convictions:

Because she held strongly this belief in the closeness of man and God, Julian has an optimistic assessment of man and the universe, and a belief that **sin is relatively unimportant....** Moreover she claims that ‘God showed me that **sin need be no shame to man but can even be worthwhile.**’ She seems to mean by this that sins are disguised virtues, for ‘in heaven what sin typifies is turned into a thing of honor.’⁸

...In Julian’s theology, we find the fullest expression of the concept of the femininity of God. ‘God is really our Mother as he is Father,’ she says. ‘Our precious **Mother Jesus** brings us to supernatural birth, nourishes and cherishes us by dying for us, giving us the sacrament.... **Her mysticism brings tenderness and ‘homeliness’ to the understanding of God our Mother.**’⁹ [Emphasis added]

The same article introduces another spiritual model. Peterson writes that “Baron Friedrich von Huelgel, a Roman Catholic layperson, was one of the most respected spiritual directors in England in the early years of this century.” He devotes an entire paragraph to this leader whom the *Encyclopedia Britannica*¹⁰ describes as “the precursor of the realist revival in

philosophy and of the theological study of religious feeling.”¹¹

Like the culture around us, many churches today seem to emphasize good *feelings* and subjective *experience* rather than uncompromising *faith* based on God’s revealed *truth*—the only foundation for a mature relationship with God. Peterson’s definition for *spirituality* in his article seems to reflect this drift from solid rock to shifting sand—along with an alarming focus on self rather than God:

Intimacy: we want to **experience** human love and trust and joy. Transcendence: we want to experience divine love and trust and joy.... **We hunger** for divine meaning, someone who will **bless us**. And so **spirituality, a fusion of intimacy and transcendence**, overnight becomes a passion for millions of North Americans.... It is heartening that our continent is experiencing a recovery of **desire to embrace intimacies** and respond to transcendence.... [Emphasis added]¹²

Peterson rightly points out the need to discriminate “between the true and false” as people “ransack exotic cultures and esoteric groups in a search for wholeness.”¹³ But what does he mean when he tells his readers to acquire “a biblical **imagination**—entering into the vast world of the Bible and getting a **feel** for the territory, an instinct for reality.” What part did *his* imagination play in the formation of The Message? [Emphasis added]

The inspired scribes of God’s holy Word documented *facts* and *observations*. They were led by the Holy Spirit, not personal imagination. God was the Creator, not man. No one should know this better than J. I. Packer, the beloved author of Knowing God. Yet in his endorsement of The Message, he uses the same questionable terms—words popularized by the New Age quest for personal empowerment and unbiblical energies. “In this crowded world of Bible versions,” writes Packer, “Eugene

Peterson's blend of accurate scholarship and vivid idiom make this rendering both distinctive and distinguished. The Message catches the logical flow, personal energy, and imaginative overtones of the original very well indeed."

What does Packer mean? Does the Bible really have imaginative overtones?

Peterson's introduction to Revelation gives that impression. He identifies John as a pastor on Patmos, who "is preeminently concerned with worship"—not sharing God-given visions of end-time events. This first century pastor is also "a poet, fond of metaphor and symbol, image and allusion" who challenges "our intelligence and imagination."

Historical *facts* and absolute *truth* made the Bible unique among the world's religious documents. Pagan myths, on the other hand, spring from *imagination*, *personal feelings* and *mystical experiences*. Yet, the author of The Message repeatedly stresses the latter. He writes, "We are after what we came for in the first place: intimacy and transcendence, personal friends and a personal God, love and worship."¹⁴

It seems paradoxical that someone who desires intimacy with God, would minimize or ignore the main obstacles to that intimacy: our sinful nature, our specific sins and our lack of submission and obedience to God. Could an answer to this paradox lie in the strange spirituality he propounds in his article?

I realize that Peterson's intent was "to recapture the tone" and subtleties of the Greek language. Whether or not he achieved that (personally I believe that his language reflects neither the heart of Jesus nor His followers' fiery devotion to a holy sovereign God and the integrity of His Word), this noble goal can never be an excuse for "dumbing-down"¹⁵ Scriptures to match our culture's downward trends. The fact that essential Biblical terms are no longer part of our everyday conversation

doesn't give us license to soften God's message. Shouldn't we rather aim to use Scriptures to lift our communications to the level where our language reflects the eternal perspective of God's revealed truth? That seems to be the exhortation of Deuteronomy 6:4-7 and 2 Timothy 3:16. When we simplify Scripture by removing its mysteries, controversies and exhortations toward God's highest, we demean our Lord and misinform believers.

Some might ask, "Who are you to question the wisdom and scholarship of respected Church leaders?"

The sad fact is that shepherds and leaders throughout history have turned from truth to embrace "new" teachings. We are all called to "examine Scriptures" and test our leaders as did the Bereans and Ephesians.¹⁶ Our ability to exercise this kind of discernment comes from the Holy Spirit—as God tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:5: "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant." (NASV) Sad to say, Peterson deleted this wonderful promise of God's sufficiency for any task He assigns us.

"But isn't most of The Message accurate?" ask some. Probably. So is the Jehovah's Witnesses' Bible. However, it only takes the distortion of a few key passages to reflect an entirely different message. When any part—even "the smallest letter"—of God's Word is changed, the integrity of the whole is lost.

If The Message is accepted as Biblical truth, three distortions of New Testament teachings could spread and permeate the Church, conforming "truth" to popular consensus and false unity:

- Since God is love, He wouldn't be so cruel as to cause someone to suffer, perish or burn in hell. So don't mention Biblical consequences or punishment.

- Since God forgives, don't be too concerned about specific sins such as homosexuality or adultery. Jesus wouldn't want you to offend someone.
- Since God is tolerant, don't correct others. Be tolerant of all, except those who criticize. (This politically correct attitude censors much-needed rational, objective criticism as a corrective force.)

The consequences of twisting God's Holy Word are devastating.¹⁷ Throughout history, whenever God's people followed distorted teaching and ignored genuine truth, they would compromise with popular culture and drift back to earth-centered spirituality. It's happening all around us today. The masks for timeless paganism—whether they are Babylonian, Canaanite, Roman or Native American—make little difference. All these polytheistic/pantheistic/monistic belief systems mocked God and established deadly connection between gullible seekers and demonic spirits. Today's most seductive masks bear an alarming resemblance to Christianity. History documents the results—both personal and cultural: a tragic blend of plagues, drought, famine and wars. (I documented these in Under the Spell of Mother Earth.) Humanism was often an intermediary step (see Ps. 12:4) and continues to provide an effective tools for banishing God until **spiritual hunger** draws people to all kinds of pagan, earth-centered alternatives. Romans 1 outlines this timeless slide.

The signs of compromise are multiplying—even in God's churches. Congregations have traded truth for myth and Mother Earth for God our Father. Sunday school curricula teach Native American shamanism and equate the Creator with the Great Spirit. Gay pastors teach spiritual guidelines, and children's pastors teach Bible "truths" through comical skits that mock God.

What we need is truth—the whole truth and nothing but. Yet Peterson, willing to use words like *consecration* and *antithetical*,

refuses to use the word *sanctification* and deletes "*holy is your name*" from the Lord's prayer. How can we cry over sin and apostasy when the holiness of God is concealed from His Word?

As we face an explosion of false teachings and spiritual substitutes both in churches and in the world around us, we had better be faithful stewards. It's time to awaken all God's people to **test, guard** and **follow** the truth our King has committed to us. Therefore,

What you heard from me [Paul], keep as the pattern of sound teaching.... Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us....

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:15)

[Ed. Eugene Peterson, translator of The Message, is a pastor.]

¹ Author of Newberry winner A Wrinkle in Time and many other books filled with occult imagery and psychic practices such as **kything**—a form of mental telepathy and communication between people, trees and any other part of creation. Kything is growing in popularity within God's churches, especially among women.

² *Sinful nature*, a condition dealt with by the cross, is not the same as "doing what we felt like doing...."

³ The lawless one is not an **Anarchist**. He will mock God's law but enforce plenty of his own laws.

⁴ The New Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament (Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers & Authors, 1972), p. 772.

- ⁵ This may sound good but makes me uneasy. This **sacredness** of the body and the goal of **“becoming one”** fits right into New Age and Neo-pagan views of the physical body and sex. It seems to me the NIV reference to **oneness** is a warning that we not **become one** with the wrong person (v. 16)—not a standard for immorality. Nor do **commitment and intimacy** define the Biblical boundaries for sex. Whether or not Peterson intended to use these terms rather than the NIV’s **prostitute** to define right and wrong sex, it could be easily be understood that way.
- ⁶ Apparently **“spiritual”** refers to those who are filled with—and walking in—the spirit, thus ready to allow God to work through him.
- ⁷ Peterson may not have realized that the title of his article, “Spirit Quest,” is the name given to the Native American initiation into adulthood. Indian youth still journey into the wilderness to connect with their guardian spirits or animal spirits. This occult ritual is promoted in classrooms nationwide and spiritual seekers flock to America’s sacred “power places” (Sedona, Mt. Shasta, Alberta...) in search of their personal spirit guide. Today, unlike a decade ago, the demonic personalities respond quickly to the summons—with devastating consequences to the host. Psychologists in Alberta, Canada, face an explosion of tormenting “multiple personalities” among gullible spiritual seekers and testify to acceleration of demonic activity in the area. **This is no time to minimize the power of Satan, the destructiveness of sin, or the over-coming power of God.**
- ⁸ An Introduction to Christian Mysticism, Lectures given at the Abbey of Gethsemani, MS. (1961), 145. Quoted by Kenneth Leech, Soul Friend (Harper San Francisco, 1992), 146.
- ⁹ Roy Bailey and Mike Brake, Radical Social Work (1975), 1. Quoted by Leech, 147.
- ¹⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica, XI (Chicago: William Benton, 1968), 810.
- ¹¹ “Spirit Quest,” 30.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 28.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ¹⁵ An expression used often to describe what is happening in public education, where teaching is geared to the lowest common denominator.
- ¹⁶ Acts 17:11; Revelation 2:2
- ¹⁷ Personal consequences are listed in Scriptures like Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Peter 3:16 and Rev. 22:18-19.

THE DECLINE OF BIBLICAL PREACHING IN CONSERVATIVE CHURCHES

By David L. Larsen

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When the prophet Amos speaks of a time of famine, "not a famine of bread, not a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11), he is describing an ominous and a dangerous time for the people of God. We are dependent on the Word of God in every area and aspect of Christian experience and ministry. The preaching of the Word of God is one of the chief means by which God has ordained the propagation of the Scriptures; 221 references to preaching in the New Testament establish the centrality of preaching in the purpose of God. P. T. Forsyth well observed, "The Church rises and falls with preaching." While preaching is not the only factor to be considered, we can see that where preaching has flourished, the Church has flourished; where preaching has languished, the Church has languished.

Thus the marked and observable decline of Biblical preaching in conservative churches must be a matter of grave concern. Liberalism and neo-orthodoxy long ago surrendered the Bible to the ravages of higher criticism. Current faddish fascination with Biblical narrative has not reintroduced an authoritative Scripture into these circles. Most lamentably moreover, the de-emphasis now on Biblical preaching among many conservatives is creating a pernicious anemia which disinclines many to challenge doctrinal error inside or outside the Church. When we are not fed and fortified with the Word of God, we are vulnerable to cultic infiltration and the inroads of false teaching.

My burden is to analyze the reasons for the current defection from Biblical preaching

from the vantage point of one who has taught expository preaching for years and traveled widely in North American and abroad.

I. Mediating views of Biblical authority weaken preaching

Our view of preaching is shaped by our understanding of what the Bible is. If the Bible is only an anthology of religious fiction and fable, preaching is an absurd exercise in futility. But if we hold to the doctrine of Scriptural authority cherished by Christ and the Apostles, then the interpretation and proclamation of the Word must have prime importance. Until modern times there has been no dispute in the Church about the total reliability and inerrancy of Holy Scripture in the whole and in the part, with the exception of the single voice of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the early centuries.

So united has the Church been on this conviction that the early creeds do not have an article on Biblical inspiration (Cf. the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Chalcedonian Creed, etc.). Conservatives have stood steadfastly for the high view of Scripture but no longer so. A tragic erosion is in process in terms of which the accuracy of the Biblical representation is often being undercut. Discussions are now held as to the historicity of Adam and Eve, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the unity of Isaiah, whether Daniel is history or prophecy, Pauline authorship of the Pastorals, etc. As conservatives waver and wilt on the totally infallible character of Holy Scripture, then it follows as night follows day that the preaching of the Word

of God diminishes and dwindles in stature and priority.

II. The mania for entertainment weakens preaching

While a renewed interest in worship is laudable, we are seeing the triumph of the so-called "consumer church" (an oxymoron if there ever were one). Audience-centered approaches to preaching seem to be winning out in the interest of being "user-friendly." So preachers become very selective in what they preach from the Bible lest they offend. Repentance, sin and Hell, etc. do not have great crowd appeal and hence are often relegated to the slag heap of homiletical oblivion. Paul warned, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts will they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears" (2 Timothy 4:3).

Give the people what they want, not what they need. This is an approach which would be very strange to the prophets, our Lord, or the Apostles. So the sermon is reduced to fifteen or twenty minutes (or shorter) so people won't feel "put upon." One of our local newspapers headlined recently, "Churches go Hollywood to fill pews." The late Bishop William Culbertson used to say, "What we win them with, we win them to." In making services an entertainment circus, we pander to the tastes of our time and the spirit of our age and we become "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4b). Preaching is being squeezed down in many conservative churches which still give lip service to the primacy of the Word.

Long ago, old Chrysostom said:

The church is not a theater, that we should listen for amusement. With profit ought we to depart hence, and some fresh

and great gain should we acquire before we leave this place. For it is but vainly and irrationally we meet together, if we have been but amused for the time and return home empty, and void of all improvement from the things spoken. (From "Homilies concerning the Statues")

III. The menace of psychologization weakens preaching

Psychology as such is value neutral as are philosophy, history, and science. But psychology has become a veritable deity in our therapeutic culture and we are hearing more and more pop psychology from our pulpits in the interest of relevancy. Thus Biblical passages become illustrations of psychological principles—we learn about depression from Elijah and leadership from Nehemiah and the God-centered discourse which has the profoundest and most powerful relevance is set aside for fluffy, moralistic truism which only pampers the flesh.

So we learn about the hidden little child in all of us from Moses striking the rock and about the importance of right-brain thinking from Jesus' instruction to the disciples in John 21 to cast the net on the right side of the boat. This is nonsense, but the insecure preachers are so desperate to please and to be "with it," that we are in danger of giving away the store. There is no special "gospel" for our generation.

Now is the time to consider the drift of our times which is threatening conservative churches. We must heed the Apostle Paul's admonition: "Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). The hour is late and dark. There are many dangers and pitfalls. Let us recommit to the preaching of the Word of God and to our soon-coming Savior.

THE CULT WITHIN THE CHURCH

By Dr. Roy E. Knuteson

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Recently I was asked to officiate at the funeral of a man who was not a member of my church. His family told me that he was an active member of a church in a nearby city, and more importantly, that he was a Thirty-Second Degree Mason. They insisted that the Masonic Lodge have a part in the memorial service.

Veteran pastors have been through this awkward situation many times and know how to handle it as an opportunity to preach the Gospel to an unsaved audience. Accordingly, I therefore requested of the mortician that the Masons go through their rites first, and then I would read the obituary and close the service with a Gospel message. I chose to have the last word.

A Bizarre Ritual

Here was a man who was a member of good standing in a recognized evangelical church, and yet at his funeral, these lodge members went through an eerie and bizarre ritual that was unchristian to the core. First, they lined up like little children behind the casket, dressed in their little white leather aprons. Then, each of them read sequentially from their lodge burial manuals, and one of them read this final prayer: "Most glorious God, author of all good and giver of all mercy, pour down thy blessings upon us, and strengthen our solemn engagements with ties of true affection." In the closing remarks, they spoke fondly of "our dear brother whom we shall miss very much," and then closed their burial statements with these written words: "So in the bright morning of resurrection, thou shalt spring again into newness of life. Until then dear brother, until then, farewell." I learned later upon questioning, that not one of these lodge

members had ever met the deceased! This is not unusual.

At the graveside, these men read again from their little books and then, motioning up and down with their outstretched hands, they chanted: "The spirit goes up and the body goes down" over and over again. They spoke of the "Supreme Architect of the Universe" and how their "friend" had gone to the "Grand Lodge in the Sky," all because he was a Thirty-Second Degree Mason.

The Hidden Cult

This is the Masonic Lodge the cult within the church. Why do I call it that? Because the Masonic Lodge bears all the marks of a major cult and most of its members come from within the organized church. Many church buildings in America, of various denominations, have cornerstones displaying the Masonic Lodge symbols. On a recent visit to Mississippi, I saw a Baptist church building that was jointly used by the Masons, and each shared an equal portion of the outdoor sign!

Freemasonry, as it is also called, is the oldest and largest secret order in the world, but it is also a religion that preaches another gospel—a gospel of good works—which is condemned in Galatians 1:6-8. It is a spiritual counterfeit that endorses and practices beliefs that have nothing to do with Christianity and are in direct violation of the teachings of Christ.

These lodge members are enslaved by their organization and, in my many years of pastoral ministry, I have yet to meet an active Mason who did not place his lodge above his church in his loyalties and

devotion. Freemasonry is, in my opinion, one of the most subtle cults of all time because it works from within the professed church and receives little condemnation by the clergy, many of whom are members themselves. The vast majority of church members are totally unaware of how tragically unscriptural this movement really is because hardly any of the many books on the cults even mention it.

The Masonic Lodge has more than a hundred fraternal organizations, including The Order of The Eastern Star and Daughters of the Nile (for women), Job's Daughters and the Order of The Rainbow (for girls), and The Order of Demolay (for boys). Other orders in Masonry are called The Tall Cedars Of Lebanon In The United States of America, The Mystic Order of Veiled Prophets Of The Enchanted Realm and The Knights Of The Red Cross Of Constantine. In America, Free Masonry is represented by The Blue Lodge with its three basic degrees: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. Additional optional degrees are available up to the Thirty-Third Degree in the Scottish branch or up to the Tenth Degree in the American Rite, also called the York Rite. The Scottish Rite branch of this cult features The Order Of The Mystic Shriners, which is an organization of high ranking Masons who are well-known for their wild drinking parties and crazy antics at their national conventions.

Free-Masonry erroneously claims that their lodge goes back thousands of years and that Solomon, John the Baptist, the Apostle John, and other Bible characters were all Masons. The Holy Bible-Masonic Edition boasts of the antiquity of the Lodge, stating: "It is admitted that Masonry is descended from the ancient mysteries. This was first arranged when the constellation Leo was in the summer solstice. Thus the antiquity of Masonry is written in the starry heavens" (Revised Edition, 1957, p. 51). Actually, this cult cannot be traced further back than AD 1717, according to World Book Encyclopedia. What began as a labor

union of stone masons in Europe grew into an international lodge which included fifteen American presidents including: Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry Truman. It is estimated that one out of twelve American males is a Mason today.

Cultic Beliefs and Practices

What really sets this group apart as a cult is their stated belief that "all men are brothers" (Universalism) and that "God" is the same, whatever the name (Unitarianism). God is often referred to in Freemasonry as G.A.O.T.U. (Great Architect Of The Universe) and "The All-Seeing Eye," or "The Nameless One Of A Hundred Names." In the secret rites of the Master Degree, the candidate is told that God's name is "Ma-Ha-Bone"—a name he is never to say aloud or even reveal. In the York Rite, The Mason Of The Royal Arch Degree is told secretly that God's name is "Jah-Bul-On." "Jah" means Jehovah, "Bul" is the pagan idol "Baal," and "On" is the Egyptian Sun God. This is just another form of syncretism, creating a composite deity of pagan origins.

Do not be deceived by their professed belief in God and their prominently displayed "Sacred Books" in their "temples." If the Lodge is composed largely of Christians, the Bible is displayed. In other settings the "Sacred Book" may be the Jewish Pentateuch or the Moslem Koran. In fact, any "sacred book" of any religion is accepted within Freemasonry.

The Masonic Lodge wants to offend no one, but please everyone. Albert Pike, regarded as one of the outstanding Masons in the Western World, states in his book *Morals and Dogmas*:

We utter no word that can be deemed irreverent by anyone of any faith. We do not tell the Moslem that it is only important for him to believe that there is but one God, and wholly unessential whether Mohammed was His prophet.

We do not tell the Hebrew that the Messiah whom he expects was born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago; and that he is a heretic because he will not so believe. An so little do we tell the sincere Christian that Jesus of Nazareth was but a man like us, or his history but the unreal revival of an older legend.

What an unholy alliance and blasphemous organization in the sight of God.

Blood-Curdling Oaths

Most Americans do not realize the terrible oaths that Masons are required to take for each advancing degree in this cult. Each Entering Apprentice is asked to solemnly swear before he knows what he is getting into, that he will never reveal the oath that he is about to take, in direct contradiction to the Word of God. Many of these blasphemous oaths are common-knowledge, and are available through a little research. Here, for example, is one such oath that a new member is required to repeat:

Binding myself under no less a penalty than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by its roots, and buried in the rough sand of the sea at low water mark where the tide ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, should I ever knowingly or willingly violate my solemn oath and obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason. So help me, God.

Each succeeding degree has a similar horrible oath and penalty connected with it. Incidentally, it is a well-known fact that Joseph Smith was deeply involved with Freemasonry and that many of the "secret vows" taken in Mormon temples today, include almost identical wording (and gestures) which he borrowed from the Masonic Lodge. In this case, one cult gave birth to another cult in many of its rituals. This revelation alone ought to turn any conscientious Christian away from Freemasonry.

Jesus commanded His followers to "not swear at all" (Matthew 5:34). It is an open violation of God's plain Word to take such oaths as required by this or any other cult. James 5:12 states: "Above all, brothers, do not swear—neither by heaven or earth, or anything else. Let your 'yes' be yes, and your 'no' no, or you will be condemned" (NIV). Our Lord would never sanction these required oaths, for He said: "I have said nothing in secret" (John 18:20). Masonry claims to have found the truth, and yet demands that its members swear never to reveal and always to conceal its teachings! How unlike true Christianity in which believers are commanded to "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15). Masonry's methods stand condemned by the Word of God.

Freemasonry is a religion without a Savior; a religion that denies the shed blood of Christ; and refuses to call Him Lord. In fact, they even prohibit prayers being said "in Jesus' Name" at any of their lodge meetings. It is a cult that knowingly misquotes the Bible and takes verses out of context to support its teachings. It rests under the condemnation of God as a sacrilegious system that needs to be exposed and refuted.

What should be the true Christian's response to this horrible cult within many a church? Here are four suggestions:

First, Masonic oaths, if already taken, ought to be renounced immediately and confessed as sinful, because it is scripturally wrong to take such vows in the first place. Leviticus 5:4-5 states: "If a person takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil—in any manner one might carelessly swear about—even though he is unaware of it, he will be guilty. When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned."

Second, The Masonic Lodge (and all of its auxiliary organizations) ought to be rejected and forsaken because the Bible says: "Do

not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:14, 17 NIV). Of all such apostate religions, God says: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins" (Revelation 18:4 NIV).

Third, The Masonic Lodge needs to be exposed as a cult, for Ephesians 5:11 commands: "Have nothing to do with the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but, rather expose them." Preachers should denounce this cult, as well as all others, from their pulpits.

Fourth, Masonic members who will not renounce their lodge as a sinful pagan cult, should be denied membership in every Bible-centered church, no matter how glowing their testimony may be. The Bible asks: "For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15 NIV). It is time that we rid the church of this awful cult in our midst.

[Reprint from a tract by the author.]

BOOK REVIEW

The Gospel According to Rome By James McCarthy

Reviewed By David A. Cook, MA

In his book, The Gospel According to Rome, James McCarthy offers a clear and concise exposition and commentary about the historic Roman Catholic "gospel." When compared to God's Holy Scripture, Rome's gospel is found to be "another gospel" (II Corinthians 11:4). The author bases his exposition of Roman Catholic teaching upon both current and age-long "official" mainline sources. These sources include the most recent Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), which Pope John Paul II credits as "A sure norm for teaching the Faith." Other sources drawn upon are council documents from Trent, Vatican I, and II; also citations from Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica, and Rome's Code of Canon Law (1983) to name a few representative samples. These sources received Rome's official Imprimatur (i.e., "Let it be printed") and Nihil Obstat (i.e., "Nothing objectionable"), and therefore are "mainline" Roman Catholic dogma and doctrine. Richard Bennett has stated in the credit section of The Gospel According to

Rome that it: "...is not only clear and well documented, but in it you will also feel the heartbeat of Catholicism."

The book is divided into four sections: Salvation, The Mass, Mary, and Authority. The Salvation section, which discusses justification and the Gospel, addresses a critical issue between Protestants and Roman Catholics. In section one the reader is given an irrefutable expose between the Gospel of Scripture and the "gospel" of Rome. The gospel of Romanism, writes McCarthy, makes human deeds such as infant baptism, necessary for salvation. On page 25 he cites the Catechism of the Catholic Church [1213]:

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit, and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers of her mission: "Baptism is

the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.”

Under the section titled “Justification through Baptism” (page 25), McCarthy notes several citations from the Catechism of the Catholic Church. One worthy of note is [1257] which states:

VI The Necessity of Baptism 1257. The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for Salvation. (59) He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them....(60)

The footnote 60, found in The Companion to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (page 464), repeats the “works-gospel” by citing documents from the Council of Trent: “1257 (3) Council of Trent (1547): DS1618 If anyone shall say that baptism is optional that is, not necessary for salvation: let him be anathema.”

The Apostle Paul reproves salvation by works in Ephesians 2: 8, 9: “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast.” See also Romans 5:1; Titus 2:13; Galatians 2:16; Acts 16:31 for further proof that a person is not saved by Rome’s “works-gospel.”

On pages 96 and 97 of the book, there is presented a summary graph of Rome’s gospel. It is helpful because of the fact that it pictures the expanded system of the Roman Catholic gospel.

In sections two, three, and four McCarthy has revealed that nothing is new in the New Catechism. Rather the “older understandings” of the Mass, Mary, and Authority are merely reasserting and refining of traditional Romanism being put in modern catechical form. The author has contributed greatly by addressing and reclarifying several old issues: The blood and body of Christ, the “Mother of God,” the Pope and bishops, and Scripture and Tradition.

McCarthy’s organized approach involves: 1. to analyze the particular issue, 2. to evaluate it (i.e., Biblical response), and finally, 3. a short summary.

I am in total agreement with this book; and am highly recommending it as must reading for Christian readers. It would be helpful to obtain a copy for one’s future study and resource. This book serves as one “key” to unlock the confusing an unscriptural bond between Christian and Roman dogma, as well as Protestants and Roman Catholics. McCarthy helps the Gospel-believer to remain firm in his stand upon faith alone/Christ alone/Grace alone/Scripture alone/Glory to God alone. The book is recommended for both Roman Catholic and non-Catholic readers because of its gracious style by which it is written.

In the back of the book there is a list of other books helpful in this controversy.

BOOK REVIEW

Blood, Medicine And The Jehovah's Witnesses

By Steve DeVore and Steve Lagoon

Reviewed by David A. Cook, MA

The critical issue for discussing the ethical and Biblical bases of both permitting and receiving a blood transfusion should become a prominent and relevant issue today in Jehovah's Witnesses' circles. Co-authors Steve DeVore and Steve Lagoon have successfully demonstrated that the blood transfusion issue be appropriately reopened, at least in the minds of rank and file Jehovah's Witnesses. This book helps to expose that the leadership of this religious cult has not been true, consistent, or Biblical concerning their official positions on blood transfusion.

The authors, who are both born-again Protestant Christians, state a major reason for writing the book on the book's back cover: "[By] using the Watchtower's own hidden history and contradictory statements against them, the reader now has an effective method of exposing the dangerous Watchtower deceptions concerning blood transfusions and other important medical issues."

The attempt by the authors is both apologetic and polemic. They hope to discredit in the minds of the general witness population that the "Society" can be ethically trusted (polemic). Also, DeVore and Lagoon respond defensively by giving a Biblical correction to the "blood-issue" (apologetic). These approaches agree with Scripture: "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ..." (II Cor. 4:4). "Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (II Corinthians 11:5); as well as "...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in

you..." (I Peter 3:15). It is the aim of DeVore and Lagoon to "startle" the average Jehovah's Witness (JW) concerning the Society's distrustful methods in medical areas so that the more honest and truth-seeking JWs might begin to question the mind-controlling aspects even in more critical areas, that is, regarding the true Gospel of the true Christ (II Corinthians 11:3). In sociological terms, then, the authors are seeking to encourage a paradigm shift by creating dissonance in the Watchtower authority paradigm.

The book can be divided into four general categories or sections. First begins an expose which chronicles the Watchtower's history on blood, medicine, and science (sociological analysis, pages 1-71). Second is a brief Biblical theology of "blood" (Biblical analysis, pages 72-104). Third is a response section to "objections" (apologetic, pages 104-147). Fourth is a section which contains a very helpful log of photocopies concerning the main documented material (data analysis, the last half of the book).

There are good points made in this work. First, the book shows unquestionably that the Watchtower has misled its followers concerning blood transfusions: 1. Prior to approximately 1940, blood transfusions were commended as heroic in Watchtower literature (pages 11, 12, 13); 2. Then in 1945 the Watchtower began "changing" their view (p. 13), even to the extent of finally anathematizing, disfellowshipping and shunning Witnesses who received blood (1960s on, see page 14); 3. During this time, paradoxically, they, the Watchtower, began making contradictory exceptions. The Governing Body introduced enough exceptions up to the

present to allow for virtually all blood parts, but not whole blood to be taken (see pages 14-16 for briefs and pages 45-47 for more details).

The authors' commentary in their "Biblical examination of the blood issue" is helpful in showing that Scripturally, blood transfusions are not prohibited; and Acts 15:29 on blood is dealt with as a first century social and transitional issue between Jewish and Gentile Christian fellowship (see pages 72-147). The "objections" section is very practical. Also, the book would be hard to follow without the very needed photo documentation. The book can be purchased with a witnessing packet of extra photocopies.

A few difficulties need to be dealt with briefly as well. This book's content is not a substitute for giving the Gospel to Jehovah's Witnesses. The authors state on page 7: "Instead of arguing over theology, attention is directed at the Society's own literature, and the literature itself makes the point." While using this polemical approach is all well and good, it must be remembered that it is only one approach

and must be used sensitively according to specific needs. The Gospel as the apologetic approach is primary. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power [emphasis mine] of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Spiritual mind-control is ultimately stopped by the Gospel applied by the Spirit of God (II Corinthians 11:3; Matthew 16:17; John 16:8).

Lastly, the book has a number of typographical errors and the organization appears somewhat rushed. The authors have promised the typographical errors will be corrected in the second printing, which is in process. Yet the reader should not let these editorial issues circumvent the very helpful contribution that Steve and Steve have made in helping to defend the faith (Jude 3). I heartily recommend the book for various reading clientele, especially medical doctors, in helping to give an informed counsel in urgent medical cases to Jehovah's Witnesses.

[Editor: R.A.S. stocks this book.]

BOOK REVIEW

Dispensationalism By Charles C. Ryrie

Reviewed By Robert D. Huff, Ph.D.

This is by far the most important book written on this subject in this decade. Dr. Ryrie's original work, Dispensationalism Today, published in 1966, was considered a classic by a recognized scholar. Now, after many attacks and suggested revisions by both friend and foe, Ryrie has given a balanced and scholarly analysis and answer in a courteous and irenic spirit.

Ryrie first discusses the many attacks on dispensationalism that have come from the pens of both liberals and conservatives

such as John Wick Bowman (1956), Philip Mauro, Oswald Allis, Daniel Fuller, Dale Moody, Clarence Bass and the latest, and perhaps the most severe, John Gerstner (1991). He lays to rest the false claim that dispensationalism taught or teaches multiple ways of salvation, and shows that classic Covenantists also made careless statements that could be misconstrued; see page 107 for quotations from Allis and Berkhof.

In Ryrie's chapter on *Progressive Dispensationalism*, he shows an in-depth

acquaintance with the writings of Blaising, Bock, and Saucy, and chooses to use the label, "Revisionist Dispensationalism" (page 174). He takes clear exception to their "complementary hermeneutic" and notes their total lack of Biblical proof for Christ's being now enthroned on David's throne. He shows that these progressives have now come to the same position as George Ladd, a covenant premillennialist (page 167), and quotes Elwell: "...the newer dispensationalism looks so much like nondispensationalist premillennialism that one struggles to see any real difference."

There is a fine chapter on the origins of dispensationalism with a chart comparing the schemes of Pierre Poiret (1646-1719) to Scofield in 1909. This chart of seven different writers includes the hymn writer, Isaac Watts (1674-1748), and Ryrie notes that Scofield's scheme was similar to Watts' and that "the glib statement that dispensationalism originated with Darby, whose system was taken over and popularized by Scofield, is not historically accurate." Ryrie repeatedly reminds his readers that history does not necessarily prove truth; many heresies were held in the early church. In his chapter on *Covenant Theology*, he states that "Covenant theology

is a post-Reformation development in doctrine" and that it was "Cocceius who developed the idea and Witsius who made it a governing category of Scriptural interpretation."

Apparently the critics of dispensationalism find the doctrine of apostasy in the church in the last days to be offensive and "divisive." Ryrie reminds us that such is the clear teaching of many Scriptures, e.g., 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; 2 Pet. 2; etc.

The positive presentation of the various dispensations, the necessity for a normal, ordinary hermeneutic, and a detailed discussion of the church as a mystery are masterfully presented. Salvation and an adequate philosophy of history are also discussed in detail.

In conclusion, this book is a "must" reading for every pastor, theologian and student, whether one agrees with all points or not. Certainly all can profit from the final plea for kindness and integrity. Moody Press is to be commended for keeping the price of this strategic book so affordable.

Dispensationalism by Charles C. Ryrie, 1995. Retail price: \$9.95

THIS 'N THAT

We introduce a new column in this issue of The Discerner. *This 'N That* will cover miscellaneous topics including additions, deletions and corrections to the catalog, corrections to previous issues of The Discerner, and other notes of interest.

Corrections to the 1995-1996 Catalog

- ◆ On page 52 under Calvinism, the book, TULIP: 5 Points of Calvinism in the Light of Scripture by Duane Spencer, the price should be \$4.95.

Additions to the Catalog

- ◆ "The Bible and Seventh Day Adventism" by John C. DeKorne, tract, SD-3, .30¢ each.
- ◆ "Halloween Unmasked" by Personal Freedom Outreach, tract, .10¢ each.
- ◆ Prophets of the Apocalypse: David Koresh and Other American Messiahs by Samples, de Castro, Abanes and Lyle, MS-32, \$9.95. The authors look at various groups and their leaders and tell why they are dangerous. It examines the inner workings of these "prophets of the apocalypse."
- ◆ Dispensationalism by Charles Ryrie (see Book Reviews), TDI-46, \$9.95. This is his new book; we also carry his book Dispensationalism Today.
- ◆ Embraced By The Light and The Bible by Richard Abanes, TDH-36, \$9.95.

The author, a nationally recognized cult researcher and specialist, meticulously documents and researches his reply to Betty Eadie's best seller, Embraced By The Light, and does so in the light of Scripture. What is the real agenda of her book? Why do her revelations show a surprising parallel to Mormonism? This book systematically answers these and other questions.

Deletions from the Catalog

- ◆ Delete the book Why I Left Jehovah's Witnesses by Ted Dencher, JW-56, on page 21. It is no longer available.

Notes Of Interest

- ◆ There has been some misunderstanding on postage costs. The minimum for any order is \$1.50. Orders above \$15.00 will be 10% of the total order.
- ◆ We have been quite busy with orders since our new catalog has gone out. This has delayed your orders somewhat. We trust you will bear with us. We sometimes hold orders until a back order comes in. If you don't wish to wait for back orders, please let us know and we will send them separately.