

The Discerner



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AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

By Dr. William A. BeVier

Thanks to a gift, Religion Analysis Service now has a FAX machine in operation. Our number is 612-535-8715. In a related item, our computer fund is now over \$600. We are still accepting gifts designated for this need.

Our need for an Office Manager still exists. We are operating with five regular volunteers, but we are praying for a full-time person.

With each issue of The Discerner some seem to let their subscription expire. They then inform us they are no longer receiving the publication. Please check your address label. If it reads "Volume 16, Number 1," it means your subscription expires with this issue.

One aspect of the cults is that they seem to be always changing. Continual study is needed to keep current. The Jehovah's Witnesses have just made another major change in their doctrines. This has to do with their teaching about the year 1914.

The suggestion that this was coming has been indicated in JW's publications for some time (for example, the November 1, 1995 issue of The Watchtower.) Then in the November 8, 1995 masthead of their magazine Awake the change was made official. For many years the masthead has concluded: "...this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a

peaceful and secure new world before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away." The new conclusion is: "...this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things."

A decided major change has occurred. Has the Creator (God) changed His promises? No. Were the JWs in error about these promises? Yes. For over 100 years the JWs have been wrong about the subject of the Lord's return. This is only one of many errors in their doctrine when compared with Scripture. It is a tragedy so many have been and are being led astray spiritually by this organization. Are you interested in ministering to these people? If so, R.A.S. has numerous items of literature to help (see our catalog, pp. 17-21. If you don't have a catalog, contact us for one).

Periodically most of us need to review what we have previously learned. For this reason we are printing another article about the Jehovah's Witnesses. This research paper by a student at Northwestern College reminds us of the cult's background to which we can relate their necessary changes in their doctrine concerning the Lord's return.

Not only has their eschatology now been changed, they have made several changes in which translation of the Bible the JWs are

to use. Charles Taze Russell, founder of the "Russellites," as they were first called, advocated the King James Version (that was the primary translation during his lifetime, 1852-1916). But in 1902 the Watchtower Society obtained the copyright to Benjamin Wilson's The Emphatic Diaglott, an interlinear Greek-English translation. The JWs began to publish it as their translation, though continuing to use the King James with their own editions. For a brief period, 1944-1950, the Watchtower Society published an edition of the 1901 American Standard Version (ASV) which uses the word "Jehovah" for the personal name of the Lord in the Old Testament.

In 1950 they published their New World Translation, which is now the official translation for the Jehovah's Witnesses. These changes have taken place in an effort to obtain a Bible translation more in

conformity to JW doctrine. Typical of most cults, JWs have formulated doctrines, then gone to the Scripture to find support for them, rather than letting the Bible speak for itself in context and establishing their doctrines, i.e., what they believe.

I invite your close attention to another article in this issue of The Discerner, that by Dr. Roy Knuteson, Senior Pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Fort Collins, Colorado. He titles his article "What Is The Gospel?", which has been printed in tract form and is available from him.

The Apostle Paul wrote "...there be gods many and lords many" (I Cor. 8:5), but there is but one true God (I Cor. 8:6). Today there are many "gospels" being preached, but only one true Gospel from God (I Cor. 15:1-4). Dr. Knuteson plainly addresses this issue in his article.

Jehovah's Witnesses

By Chad J. King

Who are the Jehovah's Witnesses? To many they are nothing more than religious magazine peddlers, while to others they are friendly persons who offer a sense of belonging. While opinions may differ, one central truth exists: the Witnesses are a cult (a group who hold to a non-biblical position of the work and/or person of Christ). The ramifications of this will become painfully clear as we examine the history, organization, and doctrine of the Witnesses.

In 1852, the founder of the Witnesses, Charles Taze Russell, was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His parents were devoted Presbyterians, but by the age of sixteen Russell had decided to leave that church. His primary difficulty with the theology of the conventional church was the doctrine of eternal suffering. Russell could not understand how a loving and merciful God could ever "punish sinners

with the infinite torments of Hellfire" (Penton 14), and therefore felt that this could not be true.

Russell found the answer he was seeking in the Adventist movement (a group whose primary focus was the second coming of Christ). The Adventists' answer to the "eternal suffering" difficulty was a concept called "annihilationism," which claims the wicked shall not suffer eternally, but will instead be completely destroyed. After hearing Jonas Wendell preach the Adventist message in 1869, Russell organized his first "Bible-study class," and the roots of the Witnesses took hold.

Much of Russell's teaching over the next several years originated not within himself, but through the teachings of others. He plagiarized extensively, drawing material from George Storrs (Annihilationism and Adventism), Dr. Joseph Seiss

(Millennialism) and others. Russell himself studied the Scriptures, but lacked any formal Biblical training (he had left school at the age of fourteen) (Penton 14).

Russell founded Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence in 1878, and in 1880 began to publish and distribute the literature (Penton 26). The Russellites grew in number through the efforts of the many evangelists he recruited to share the message of the "last-days." This message claimed Christ would return in 1914 and receive the church, and this message drew many converts into the Witness society. "Pastor" (as he was called by his followers) Russell's teachings were laid out in his several volume work, Studies in the Scriptures, as well as several other books and pamphlets. Through these avenues the Witness message was spread, proclaiming Russell to be the messenger of God, making the truth clear in the last days (Chretien 28), even after the prophecy of 1914 failed to come true. Russell died in 1916, still proclaiming that Armageddon was at hand, and that the world powers would fall in 1918.

Russell was succeeded as president of The Watchtower by J. F. Rutherford, a lawyer and long-time follower of Russell. (Oddly enough, Rutherford attained this position apart from Russell's written will, which had left the property and operation of The Watchtower to a committee of five other men). Rutherford was a man with a powerful personality and a forceful speaking manner. He eliminated all other forms of control in the Witnesses, claiming (as Russell did) to be the very mouthpiece of God (Rutherford 13).

Rutherford instituted several ideologies over his almost thirty-year presidency. The Witnesses were commanded by Rutherford to refuse all and any involvement in war, military, or any other governmentally related institution (Schnell 37). To this day, the Witnesses refuse to acknowledge any human government (other than the Society, that is). This caused a great deal of

tension between the Witnesses and the U. S. Government during World War I, and many of the Witnesses (Rutherford included) were arrested. Other changes instituted during Rutherford's "reign" include the elimination of various "pagan celebrations," such as birthdays, Christmas, and Easter, and a vicious attack on all other religious groups.

Rutherford died on January 8, 1942. He was succeeded by Nathan Knorr, the president who sought to make the Witnesses "respectable." Knorr continued in the manner of Rutherford and Russell, condemning those who were "disloyal" to him, and himself claiming to be the "mouthpiece of God." Nonetheless, he instituted several doctrinal requirements and standards for his followers, excluding blood transfusions and setting rules of sexual conduct. After Knorr's demise in 1977, Frederick W. Franz became the President of the Witnesses. He continued in this position until 1992, and was followed by Milton G. Henshel in the Presidency.

The Bible is considered inferior to God's continuing revelation through "The Watchtower Society"

The Jehovah's Witnesses are a global organization based in Brooklyn, New York. Headed by a governing body of several members (the actual number has fluctuated somewhat), this group is responsible for the religious life of more than three million Jehovah's Witnesses (Chretien 15). This body's job is to interpret the message of God to the Witnesses, as well as administrate and advise the Witness population. The President of the organization (who is elected into his position by the rest of the governing body) receives his position for life, and is responsible for leading the group. He

determines what topics will be discussed during each session of the body (Franz 40), and in this way significantly influences and controls the body. Voting is the method of determining the stand of the Witnesses for doctrinal issues, and a two-thirds majority is required to pass (100). There are also several "governing body committees." Each focuses on a certain aspect of the administration of the Witnesses (writing, teaching, service, publishing, personnel, and chairman's) and is under the main governing body's control (Franz 91).

On the regional and local levels there are district and circuit overseers. District overseers travel throughout the various "circuits," which are groups of approximately twenty congregations each. They serve as witnessing trainers and preachers for various congregations. Circuit overseers are appointed over a circuit, and each overseer spends about two weeks a year working with each congregation. He also approves the appointment of elders or ministerial servants in each Kingdom Hall (Penton 233). An "elder" is one of a group of men who run each congregation—they are, in effect, responsible for the smooth functioning of the congregation. They hold almost absolute authority over the hall, and are subject only to the circuit overseer and the Watchtower itself (238). Ministerial servants are those who are leaders, who serve zealously, and contribute generously to evangelism (238-239). Under the ministerial servants are the pioneers, who make up the bulk of the evangelistic force of the Witnesses (239). Witnesses meet several times weekly in the local Kingdom Hall to hear messages and exposition-studies of The Watchtower (242).

The main method of spreading the Witness message are the publications, The Watchtower and Awake!. These are written by the president of the Witnesses (during Knorr's presidency, others, who remain anonymous, began to contribute to these writings). The huge number of publications

(about 17 million copies per week) are put out from the Brooklyn plant, collectively called "Bethel" and "Gilead" (Penton 221). This is the largest and fastest system of publication in the world today.

Before we look at the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses, it is crucial to understand two important facts. First, Witnesses believe in continuing revelation through The Watchtower and through any other Witness publication. In fact, while they do technically hold to some semblance of Biblical authority, the Bible is considered inferior to God's continuing revelation through "The Watchtower Society." Second, the very terminology used when working with Witnesses or their literature must be carefully and clearly defined. What appears to be "Christian-like" at first will prove heretical under closed examination (see Martin's discussion in chapter two of Kingdom of the Cults).

Jehovah's Witness theology differs from Christianity in several areas. Some of these differences relate to the person, deity, and work of Christ, the person and deity of the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, the doctrine of eternal judgment and everlasting life, salvation by faith alone, and the resurrection, to name but a few (Martin 51-61).

The person of Christ is one of the most perverted of the Witness doctrines. This arises from the inability to understand the nature of the Trinity; since "the three-persons-of-one-God" seems to make no logical sense, the Witnesses conclude that it cannot be true, despite what Scripture says in Matthew 28:18-20. Since we finite beings cannot comprehend the infinite character of God, the Witnesses conclude the Trinity concept is untrue. (This manifests itself not only in relation to the person of Christ, but in relation to the Holy Spirit as well.) According to Witness doctrine, Jesus was the first created being of Jehovah God, and served as Michael the archangel. He then assumed the form of man on earth as Jesus, being born,

crucified, and buried. As this point, Jesus the man was not resurrected, but his body either was dissolved into gases by Jehovah God or still remains in a different tomb (Martin 97-98). His appearances after His death recorded in Scripture were those of the glorious "spirit being," not real flesh, but gave the appearance of real flesh. After this, Christ returned to heaven and resumed His position as Michael the archangel. In this we see that they deny the Biblical view of Christ's deity (see John 8:58 and Phil. 2:5-8).

As previously mentioned, the Jehovah's Witnesses claim that there is no Hell, and that the souls of the wicked (non-Witnesses) will not be in eternal torment in the lake of fire (Rev. 20), but that they will be totally annihilated along with Satan at the final judgment (Forrest 257).

One of the major difficulties for the Witnesses in their concept of "continuing revelation" has to do with various contradictions and changes in the Watchtower theology. The Watchtower Society has set dates for Christ's return, the ruin of the world society, as well as the end of the world and other key events. On each of these occasions, the date passed without incident, and shortly afterwards an explanation for each failed prophecy was given by the Watchtower Society (Curry 99-136). They have put forth statements as "God's truth" only to change them a short time later (Franz 47). This shows that they are not subject to an unchanging God, but rather to the ideas of changeable men.

One of the most disturbing effects of the Jehovah's Witnesses can only be seen in the attitudes of those who follow the Watchtower Society faithfully. These people are brainwashed, seeking to live a perfect life under the dictates of "Jehovah's anointed messengers" in Brooklyn. They follow The Watchtower's teachings without question, for fear of loss of their eternal reward. They are not free to think for themselves: "... the pronouncements of the

Society are the very voice of God Himself" (Hewitt 20).

Who are the Jehovah's Witnesses? They deny that Jesus Christ is God and that Jesus was truly resurrected from the dead. They deny the sole authority of the Scriptures, placing human extra-Biblical revelation of more than equal standing with the Bible. They are, without a doubt, a cult with a powerful hold on their people. The Society is also very cunning in their manipulation of Scripture, quoting Biblical passages often, and almost every time out of context. We must prepare ourselves for the inevitable conflicts we will most definitely encounter in dealing with any Witnesses we may meet in two ways: 1. know who we are facing, and 2. know the Word of God. God seeks to save, and we must know what God really says if we are to defend ourselves and others from out-of-context Biblical attacks of the Jehovah's Witnesses, and prove to be the true witnesses of Christ.

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WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

By Roy E. Knutson, Ph.D.

The Greek word for Gospel is *euangelion* from which we have derived our word "evangelism." It means basically "good news." But, according to the Bible there is more than one "good news," and in several instances the "good news" turns out to be "bad news." In Galatians 1:6-8, Paul states:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all.... But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you, let him be eternally condemned! (NIV)

In 2 Corinthians 11:4, he warns of "a different gospel from the one you accepted." What is this "different gospel?" and how does it differ from the true Gospel?

The Three Marks of the True Gospel

In Galatians 1:11-12, we learn that the true gospel is by *divine revelation*. There are many man-made gospels, there is only one heavenly-revealed gospel. It is the one in your Bible.

In Galatians 2:1-5, Paul declares that the true gospel is the *one universal belief* held by all the apostles. The Bible teaches one simple gospel message.

This one true gospel is *totally a gift of grace* on God's part. There is no room for human effort whatever.

"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (Galatians 2:21 NIV).

The moment a person dilutes the gospel he pollutes it. It becomes a work system instead of a grace system.

The Galatian Errors

The Christians in Galatia were being corrupted in two ways by false teachers and cultists of their day. They were being told that (1) salvation was dependent upon faith, *plus* human effort. In short, they were to keep the Old Testament laws of God as their part in the salvation contract. Likewise they were being taught (2) that the retention of their salvation was also dependent upon keeping the laws of God. This is why Paul asks in Galatians 3:3 these questions:

"Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (NIV)

Grace cannot be diluted. Human effort of the smallest proportion immediately makes it a "different gospel." Few people seem to really understand the "gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), and they don't realize how precisely and carefully this

must be defined and guarded. The answer will surprise you.

What Makes a Different Gospel?

First, it is not an unscriptural belief about Jesus. Of course, if anyone denies the deity of our Lord he is unsaved and is a heretic (2 Peter 2:1). If you are wrong on this vital subject, you are wrong everywhere. But a person can be perfectly orthodox about the person and work of Christ and still preach a "different gospel." He can believe in the virgin birth, the vicarious atonement, and the physical resurrection of Jesus and still fall under the condemnation of Galatians 1:8!

Second, it is *not* a denial of the need to accept Christ as personal Savior. There are many churches who speak of "Jesus as the only Savior," yet they preach a "different gospel" than the "gospel of the grace of God," and they will go to hell because of it.

The people of Galatia were being told by these false teachers that "It is all right to believe on Jesus Christ as their personal Savior." In fact they said it was a "divine must." The subtle error however, was the demand for circumcision, Sabbath observances, and laws keeping as necessary ingredients for salvation and its retention. Paul said (if it's true) "Christ is no value to you at all" (Gal. 5:2). "You have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

The moment a person dilutes the gospel he pollutes it. It becomes a work system instead of a grace system.

"And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11:6 NIV).

You can't have it both ways. Either it is all of "grace" or it is of "works." Since "grace" means you receive something you don't deserve, or "unmerited favor," it by its very nature permits no added ingredient of human effort.

Multitudes of people thought they believed the true gospel and were saved, but in actuality, they professed a "different gospel" and were hell-bound. When the question was raised in the First Century: "What must I do to be saved?" the Judaizers responded by saying: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *and* be circumcised," or "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ *and* keep the Law."

The "Different Gospel" Today

Today we may not be asked to go through the rites of circumcision, or be required to keep certain religious holidays and Old Testament Laws as essentials for salvation. However there are many disastrous ingredients being introduced by different groups at this very moment, that fall under the condemnation of God.

There are many churches that speak of the so-called "sacraments" as a "means of grace": This is unscriptural! Infant baptism, or adult baptism is a human effort and if viewed as essential to salvation falls under judgment of Scripture. When Paul wrote: "If you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no more value to you at all" (Gal. 4:2 NIV). He could also have written: "If you be baptized as a baby for salvation, Christ will be of no value to you." Indeed, there are many churches that view infant baptism as the successor rite to circumcision. Millions of people are being deluded by this heresy right now!

Many others teach that "communion" somehow keeps you saved. This is one reason why some people are very punctual on "Communion Sunday," even if its only one time a year. It is the Galatian error all over again. If partaking (or not partaking) of the communion elements had something to do with salvation and its retention, then the very effort of doing it would be "works" and that's condemned in the Bible.

The list goes on. Religious leaders have added church membership; catechism classes; confirmation; and human morality

as conditions and conclusions for salvation. If you doubt that, take a door to door survey of your neighborhood and ask people what they are trusting in to take them to heaven. The results will astound you.

We can add absolutely nothing to the finished work of Christ or we “set aside the grace of God” (Gal. 2:21). We can no longer sing “Jesus paid it all.” We must add a second verse that says: “I have to do something,” or “I must do my part.” That’s heresy!

It is time to quit saying: “There are saved people in every group.” We must stop approving churches and whole

denominations that may have a correct doctrinal statement but pervert the gospel through their rites of baptism and communion. Instead, we need to reach out to all the atheists, agnostics, unbelievers, *plus* those who through ignorance have polluted the gospel of grace and therefore have no gospel at all.

The gospel must be precisely defined. It must be scriptural. It must be of grace.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and that is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works so that no one can boast.” (Eph. 2:8, 9 NIV).

FIFTY YEARS OF HISTORY

By JoAnn BeVier

What a milestone! What a heritage! The organization of Religion Analysis Service is 50 years old this year. In the 1996 issues of The Discerner, we would like to write about the history of R.A.S. and some of the reminiscences of ones who have been an active part of R.A.S. since its beginning years. We have gone back into our archives to research the following material, and trust that for some of you it will bring back memories. For those who are from a younger generation, we hope it will give you a flavor of evangelical Christianity, its fervor and impact in the past 50 years. We will be quoting from letters and material from the very inception of Religion Analysis Service.

We quote from an excerpt from an article in The Sunday School Times for December 7, 1946:

Mr. Jones was reared in a Seventh-Day [sic.] Adventist home, but was unsaved when he left home to earn his living. Years later, when he experienced the miracle of the new birth, he promptly joined an Adventist church, believing it the one and only right church. He soon accepted a position with the Adventist’s publishing house at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. After several years with their work in Washington, he responded to a call from their mission board and went to India to become a manager of the sect’s publishing house in that field.

The Beginning

Religion Analysis Service, Inc. was conceived in faith and brought forth in prayer, “for such a time as this.” Its birthday was July 2, 1946 and its christening July 16, 1946. Reverend Ernest Bradshaw Jones was the man of vision responsible for its formation.

If Mr. Jones had not been a lover of truth, a real student of the Word of Truth, and a man with the courage of his convictions there would be nothing to write about him except that he had reached a position of responsibility and honor in his denomination. (1)

But in his own words he said:

Because I was possessed of a strong, unabating urge to search the Scriptures for myself, and to "prove all things," holding fast only that which was good, I, at long last came to see the light of truth, and in that glorious light was made to perceive the appalling darkness of Seventh-Day [sic.] Adventism. (2)

He renounced Seventh-day Adventism and wrote booklets and spoke in many places exposing the falsities of this branch of Adventism.

...we have taken initial steps toward the launching of a unique, specialized and...urgently needed soul-saving ministry...

Quoting excerpts from a letter written by Rev. E. B. Jones of Minneapolis, MN to Mr. R. G. LeTourneau of Peoria, IL (later of Texas):

While devoting myself to the task of exposing the falsity of Seventh-day Adventism, I have received many inquiries not only regarding Adventism, but regarding other false cults also. God has His "little ones" here and there entangled in these dangerous "isms." The comparatively few true shepherds are not always prepared with adequate information to refute such "damnable heresies"....

...So definite was my God-given burden and vision, that on July 2, and again on July 16, I called together a few Christian friends for prayer and conference. We felt impelled to action by such scriptures as Matthew 24:24; II Peter 2:1-2; Acts 20:28-30; II Timothy 4:1-4; Ephesians 5:6-13; Jude 3. And our Lord gave us such agreement, according to His

promise in Matthew 18:19, that we have taken initial steps toward the launching of a unique, specialized, and, we believe urgently needed soul-saving ministry for these "perilous times." (3)

The letter was to request Mr. LeTourneau's service on an "at-large Advisory Council." On a drafted letterhead were the following Officers and Board of Directors:

President: Dr. J. Enos Windsor (Pastor, Park Avenue Methodist Church, Minneapolis).

First Vice-President: Rev. Louis Berks (Director, The Christian Approach to the Jews of the Twin Cities, Minneapolis).

Second Vice-President: Rev. C. E. Richter (Pastor, Bible Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis).

Secretary: Rev. Herbert V. Caneday (Pastor, Groveland Church, Udenominational, Wazata, Minneapolis).

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An interesting note: Rev. Herbert Caneday is still on the Board of Directors and served as Secretary this past year, and Dr. Charles Feinberg was still on the Advisory Board until his homegoing this past year.

The adopted name Religion Analysis Service was to be threefold: Religion because as Paul said to a pagan audience on Mars Hill, "I perceive that in all things ye are very religious." He would say the same today. Much is carried on in the name of religion and many false isms claim to be founded on the Bible. Religion doesn't save, Jesus saves.

The Analysis is in answer to the question: there are so many creeds, which is right? To assist in giving answers or help to those who are seeking assistance for themselves or ones they are concerned about was the desire of R.A.S. This analysis is to examine the religion or false teaching in light of the Scripture, Psa. 119:89; 2 Tim. 2:15, "rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

Service is the ministry of the organization and was originally to offer these specialized services: lectures: to supply speakers and

Bible teachers on particular false religions and doctrines; writers: to critique and examine material for printing; publishers: books, tracts, etc., produced and distributed; booksellers: to stock and distribute literature on false systems within Christendom.

These original purposes have changed somewhat through the years because of lack of staff and time, and volume of responses. But basically the intent and reasons for the founding of R.A.S. are being carried on through the office located now in the Twin Cities' suburb of Robbinsdale, Minnesota.

The next part of this series will deal with the Work and Ministry Through the Years.

End Notes

- 1 "A New 'Service' for Exposing Error: How the Religion Analysis Service, Inc. Came Into Being and What It Proposes To Do" (The Sunday School Times, December 7, 1946).
- 2 Jones, E. B. "Why You Should Not be a Seventh-day-Adventist" (5th edition), and "Free Indeed" (2nd edition), 1946.
- 3 Letter written by E. B. Jones of Minneapolis, MN to R. G. LeTourneau of Peoria, IL.

THE FOLLOWING IS TAKEN FROM AN EARLY BROCHURE
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E. B. JONES



H. V. CANEDAY

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New and Unique Defender of the Faith

The following article is reprinted from the first issue of The Discerner, Vol. I, No. 1, May-June 1947. It is by Rev. E. B. Jones, Executive Director of Religion Analysis Service, Inc.

“THIS TIME”... AND THE NEED FOR DISCERNMENT

By E. B. Jones

“... And He said...ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?” (Luke 12:54-56.)

For us today it is not difficult to sense the great astonishment which plainly filled the mind of our Lord as He inquired of the people among whom He walked twenty centuries ago,—How is it that you do not comprehend the significance of this time?

To that generation had occurred the actual fulfillment of numerous long-cherished promises of a coming Divine Deliverer—One to be anointed of God “to preach good tidings unto the meek;...to open the prison [of sin] to them that are bound.” Yes, that One—Deity clothed in humanity—*had* come to the people of *that* time—the One upon Whom a just and righteous God had in unsearchable love laid the iniquity of all men, and through Whose sacrificial death was to be made possible the salvation of a lost world.

**In this time of unprecedented
peril, the need for discernment
in matters religious is far
greater than ever before.**

But why did the people of that day fail to *know* their time, also fail to recognize their promised Saviour? Jesus Himself answered the question. Not long before they in blindness and unbelief condemned Him to the Cross, He declared, “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day,

the things which belong unto thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes.”

Hidden from their comprehension was the stupendous meaning of their day, and veiled from their recognition, too, was their long-awaited and now-present Redeemer. Tragedy of all tragedies was this lack of spiritual perception, the utter failure of that generation to discern the meaning of its time.

* * *

But are not many in this our day likewise lacking in discernment? Do not many, in all walks of life, fail to recognize and appreciate the great significance of our time? Were the Lord Jesus to move among us today as He mingled with men long ago, would He not ask of us, “How is it that ye do not discern this time?”

As the prophetic Word long has foretold would be so, this time—*our* time—is a time of unparalleled wickedness, perplexity, and woe; a time when there is “more unrest, more confusion, more violence, more crime, more intrigue, more immorality, more deceit and more fear than at any other period in earth’s history.” The Divine predictions pointing to our day and the end of the age, have minutely come to pass, yet the real import of this time is discerned by but few, even among those who have taken upon themselves the name of Christ.

Our day is that momentous period also when another of our Lord's great prophecies is being exactly fulfilled. Note His words: "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets....If it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." And He previously had warned regarding these same latter-day deceivers, when He declared: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

A wolf dressed in the clothing of a sheep would be most cleverly disguised, but this is precisely the way in which Satan accomplishes his nefarious work of deluding the undiscerning and unwary. Camouflaged as "ministers of righteousness," his "ministers" go brazenly about, seeking whom they may beguile and destroy. And just as the Apostle Peter by inspiration foretold, "many" are following "their pernicious ways." In this regard, another well declares,—

"It is sad, but true, that the great majority of church-members are so ignorant of the devices of Satan and so ignorant of the Bible, that the Devil and his camouflaged ministers have little difficulty in keeping them so confused they frequently mistake the servants of Satan for the ministers of Christ. Thousands upon thousands of deluded victims are identified with one of a number of Bible-denying cults, and in their utter spiritual ignorance of God's infallible Word, are blindly following their blind leaders into an awful ditch from which there will be no escape.

"Satan has not only permitted, but has enthusiastically helped the founders and leaders of these Christianized pagan cults to mix in with their heathen philosophies and vagaries some of the ethical teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, also to here and there interject an isolated verse

or two found in other parts of the Bible, so that with their counterfeit Christianity and their unholy mixture they can beguile, seduce, and deceive their unwary, gullible victims."

* * *

In this time of unprecedented peril, the need for discernment in matters religious is far greater than ever before. With a measure of appreciation of the need, this specialized ministry—Religion Analysis Service—has, under God, been brought into being. The supreme objective of this new endeavor—OF the Church and FOR the Church—is to faithfully serve the Body of Christ in this hour of awful apostasy; to assist as many as possible to distinguish "the spirit of truth" from "the spirit of error," and thus aid in guarding them against "the wiles of the Devil."

And *The DISCERNER*—this newly born mouthpiece of R.A.S.—is dedicated to a most important part of that vital service. Its pages, from issue to issue, are to be devoted to the faithful sending forth of truth-revealing, error-disclosing Scriptural light, with the earnest hope of bringing practical, Christ-actuated assistance to those in need of such help.

Subscribe for, read, and aid us in widely circulating *The DISCERNER*. and pray that its ministry may be truly Church-enlightening, Church-defending, and Church-upbuilding in "this time"—in this *momentous* time.

* * *

This first number of *The DISCERNER*, containing only eight pages and issued as a bi-monthly, is but a beginning. We hope soon to be able to publish monthly, also to increase the number of pages. Please PRAY and GIVE to that end.

BOOK REVIEW

Protestants and Catholics, Do They Now Agree?

By John Ankerberg and John Weldon

Reviewed by David A. Cook

Today's ecumenical movement, whether good or bad, is never the less very much alive! Co-authors, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, answer quite satisfactorily the question posed in the title of their book, Protestants and Catholics, Do They Now Agree? (Harvest House, 1995). Their answer comes through very clearly with an emphatic but unfortunate no! The author's stated reason for this negative conclusion is based upon loyalty to divine truth as over and against "visible unity" before a lost and declining cultural world. In regard to this pervasive social decline they write on page 134, "...united social action must not be at the expense of truth, and unity should never be allowed to eclipse the most important spiritual truth of all: the gospel."

The reason for writing the book, in large measure as stated on the back cover, involved the timely need to respond to: "The signing of a new agreement entitled 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together'..." (abbreviated after this as ECT). Such evangelical leaders as Bill Bright, Charles Colson, J. I. Packer and Pat Robertson, to name a few, signed the ECT (see page 134 for a larger list). Therefore a need has arisen to clarify just what was agreed to between Catholic/Protestant constituents. Is the ECT a remarkable achievement or a tragic compromise? Ankerberg and Weldon conclude the latter.

The book (21 chapters) could be divided into two sections (note: reviewer's divisions). The first half of the book sets the background for the ECT discussion, while the latter half of the book treats more directly the ECT document and other related matters.

The book opens with a pre-publication news release by Ankerberg which involved a meeting of ten Evangelical Protestant leaders, including some who had signed the ECT. Results drawn from this meeting involved a doctrinal statement which affirmed "justification by faith alone." There was a unanimous consensus among those present to the doctrinal statement. Following the news release in the book were three "personal words" from R. C. Sproul, John MacArthur and James D. Kennedy.

The first few chapters deal with the need to write the book. Involved in this need the question was addressed, "does salvation by faith alone (Protestant) or a faith works gospel (Catholic) still divide the two churches?" Regrettably, the churches are still divided in a substantial and doctrinal way as was shown throughout the book.

Ankerberg and Weldon in chapter three explain "justification" in the book of James. James addresses the practical outgrowth of genuine faith seen before men in Christian Living, while Paul addresses how a sinner may be declared righteous before God in receiving Christian life.

In essence, Paul is writing about a person being justified before God, while James is writing about a man being justified before men. Men cannot see another person's heart as God can. The only way men can tell that someone has a genuine faith is by seeing his changed life—in other words, by the person's works.

Thus, justification before God is by faith alone; justification (or vindication) before men is by works. (37)

On page 41 it is documented that Roman Catholic Dogma proclaims a works based gospel. See document's footnote which refers to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (489-90). The authors, Ankerberg and Weldon, reason this way: "In a very real sense, then, isn't Catholic 'justification' largely God's recognition of divinely empowered human merit and goodness?" (43). Yet, Ephesians 2:8-9 contradicts Catholic dogma saying, "...for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not as a result of works lest anyone should boast."

In regard to Catholic/Protestant reconciliation, chapter 5 is one of the most relevant chapters in the book entitled "The Bible and Justification." There is a valuable treatment in chapter 5 on Old and New Testament use of justification as "declared" righteousness, and not the Catholic meaning of "infused" righteousness. The Catholic misunderstanding regarding the proper definition of justification to wrongly mean, "making righteous by subjective spiritual renewal" was evenly treated in this book. Theologian J. I. Packer, one of the signers of ECT, is quoted on page 58, "The tridentine Council of Trent definition of justification as not only the remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man is erroneous." Readers may further research the documentation in footnote seven of chapter five for a representative sampling of Greek dictionaries that give the Biblical (i.e., Protestant) understanding of justification. Also pages 55-57 cite over fifty verses alone (e.g., Romans 3:28-30; 4:4,16; 5:1).

In chapter 6 the gulf between a free gospel (Protestant) and a work gospel (Roman Catholic) is drawn even wider. The Catholic sacraments are for Catholics, the vehicle for salvation. The trip that the Catholic ritualist must take with this sacramental vehicle is the rest of his mortal life; and even beyond through purgatory (chapter 7), in order to merit justification unto eternal life. The only way one could bridge Catholic and Protestant

understanding of the following terms; justification, faith, born-again (just to name a few theological words), is by definition-switching and Scriptural twisting. The authors dealt with this hermeneutical issue in chapter 10 ("Redefining Biblical Words") and chapter 11 ("Two Ways of Reading the Bible"). Even Karl Keating, a foremost pro-Catholic apologist, is quoted by Ankerberg and Weldon, "as in so many matters, fundamentalists [e.g., conservative Christians] and Catholics are at loggerheads because they define terms differently" (114).

Chapters 12 and following deal with "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" issues in the present day (1995). The authors do very well to expose the fact that real agreement is still far away. Evangelical leaders were criticized on four reasons: 1. The evangelical signers were aware of past Church history; 2. The affirmations in the agreement are ambiguous and not precise; 3. Not all statements made in this document are supported by Scripture; and 4. The main doctrine separating Catholics and Evangelicals—justification by faith—is not dealt with clearly (155-156). Clarification about the author's positions regarding these issues is incisively laid out from chapter 12 to the end of the book.

Chapter 17 deals with several Catholics who wish to bring Protestants and Catholics back together; and yet, it is more often than not, back on the road to Rome as a prodigal son who needs to return to the Church (Roman).

Lastly the authors analyze "The U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Group on Justification by Faith." Ankerberg and Weldon demonstrate again that no real "fundamental consensus" was reached on the meaning of the Gospel (228). "Thus, even the official Lutheran response itself does not conclude that agreement on the gospel was reached—in clear contradiction of widely asserted claims to the contrary" (233).

The conclusion I reached is that while this book is not as technical as some writings, its popular and readable style as well as its comprehensiveness and its timely statement, seasoned with Grace (Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29), makes it a superb

guide to true Catholic and Protestant ecumenism. I recommend Protestant and Catholics, Do They Now Agree? as good reading and preparation for evangelizing the lost for Christ.

BOOK REVIEW

Satanism

By Bob and Gretchen Passantino

Reviewed by Ervin D. Ingebretson

Satanism, published by Zondervan Publishing House, is one of a series of sixteen volumes entitled "The Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements." This series treats many of the most important belief systems confronting the Christian Church today.

The authors, Bob and Gretchen Passantino, who have worked in cult apologetics for more than twenty years, show how satanism has made unprecedented inroads into our society. Their style of writing as requested by the publisher is a concise outline form which facilitates the reader to know where one is on the outline of the book.

A feature of this material is an exclusive interview with Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan, from which research material was garnered.

According to the authors, it is difficult to classify contemporary satanists. They define their religious belief as a "form of belief and expression holding to the worship of Satan, whether Satan is defined as a supernatural person, a deity, a devil, a supernatural force, or most commonly, the self" (page 7). Most satanists do not believe in the existence of any spiritual being, Satan or God; they believe in the power of self.

While precise statements are unobtainable, the consensus of researchers is that the total number of people who would describe themselves as satanists is somewhat fewer than 6,000 worldwide (page 10). Most satanists are male, thirteen to thirty.

The authors dedicate a large portion of this work to the historical development of demonology, or doctrine concerning Satan and evil. The early Church considered all pagans as coming from the world of demonic influence, and that members welcomed into the Body of Christ must renounce the Devil. Of interest to this historical development of demonology during the early Middle Ages are the common elements shared by Islam and Christianity. Also the rise of folklore and folk religion influenced Christian ideas about Satan. However, in the formal teaching and practice, the primary focus in demonology was on theological, academic and Biblical issues, not on popular or folk issues.

In the development of demonology, the witch craze became very prominent. Strangely, the witch hunts increased during the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods. The heightened activity against witches produced tortures, confessions and executions in that order. The worst of this activity took place in Germany, Scotland,

France and Salem, Massachusetts. Many manuals were written to deal with this explosive dimension of demonology. This activity of Satan through witches did not produce a major effect upon contemporary satanism.

“Anti-morality is foundational to contemporary satanism,” say the authors (page 39). For many, in spite of the Reformation, religion was unimportant and even rejected. A phrase popularized by satanists and witches alike was “Do What You Will.” Several authors championed this philosophy. It was out of this climate that Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan after visiting a service of “devil worshippers.” LaVey envisioned his church as a place for free thinking people who can realize their full potential. A nine-statement creed of the church praises Satan for his influence in the participants’ lives (page 44).

Of all the misconceptions about satanism, its confusion with witchcraft is the most prominent. Some self-styled satanists call themselves witches or warlocks. Primarily, confusion results since both are intolerant of Christianity. The authors cite psychic phenomena, New Ageism and Magic as not representative of satanism. Even Anton LaVey is opposed to a structural system of satanism.

Another misconception discussed deals with criminal activity. Most crimes committed by satanists are not committed because they are satanists, rather they are criminals who have a satanist worldview.

Another major misconception has to do with satanic ritual abuse (SRA). Media sensationalism, therapeutic fads or irresponsible journalism contribute to over-inflated numbers of SRA. Social factors that foster the acceptance of SRA stories are family disintegration, mental health community, pornography and child abuse. The adult victim is usually a white female woman twenty-five to thirty-five with a previous history of non-specific

psychological problems. There is not one common profile for a child victim. After lengthy discussion on SRA, the authors conclude that evidence proves that this is a harmful social legend akin to the witch hunts.

Theologically, satanists do not care enough about Christian theology to articulate specific opinions about specific theological positions (page 63). The Satanic Bible is a declaration of emancipation from an authoritative centrally ordered system. It is useful as a guide but not to be believed or obeyed.

The authors assess the satanist views of major doctrines of the Christian faith. Satanists believe there is no God, no supreme, all-powerful deity in the heavens. To the satanist God is the self.

It is interesting to note how satanists view Satan. To them he is a neutral force used for personal gain. Many view themselves as Satan. Satanists reject the reality of sin, therefore see no need for salvation. The primary principle that motivates satanists is that human fulfillment is accomplished through human effort and power.

A very practical section in this work deals with witnessing tips as one seeks to present the claims of the Gospel to a satanist. Since most satanists consider themselves atheistic, one should approach a satanist as one would anyone who does not believe in a supreme being. Focus on the reality of God. Most teenage satanists use drugs and need abuse intervention. As satanism involves self-centeredness, one should explain that Jesus provides the only true self-fulfillment. One should not allow their mockery to detract from a well-reasoned discussion.

In making this critique one is drawn to the extraordinary number of reference materials as authors cite primary, secondary, Christian and non-Christian sources.

Final chapters include a chart comparing satanist and Bible teachings and a glossary of terms.

The authors appear to deal factually and fairly with truth, myth, conspiracy and

error regarding this cultic movement. They hold high the standard of the Scriptures as they weave God's Word through this dissertation shining the light on truth pertaining to satanism.

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