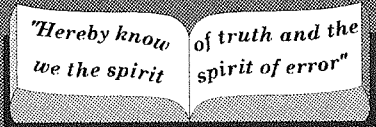


The Discerner



Volume 19, Number 2

April • May • June 1999

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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Editorial Committee

Dr. William A. BeVier
Timothy J. Buege

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

In this issue we complete our two-part series on the Church of Scientology. Anyone who follows the media is familiar with the name. It is hoped that these articles will give our readers a more complete understanding of the movement.

We are pleased to present another article by Dr. David L. Larsen. Dr. Larsen is Professor Emeritus of Preaching at the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois. However, he shared with us that he still does some teaching of advanced students at the School. Some may remember him as the former pastor of the First Evangelical Covenant Church in Minneapolis and former Vice President of Religion Analysis Service. He is the author of several books and a noted speaker on the subject of prophecy. The article in this issue is a distillation of his recent book The Company of the Preachers: A History of Biblical Preaching from the Old Testament to the Modern Era (Kregel, 1998). We appreciate his providing us with this condensation for our readers. We are looking forward to presenting another article from him in the future.

Leslie Buege, one of our Board members, has provided us an excellent review of Dave Hunt's new book on the Y2K issue. We consider this the best book on the subject which has come to our attention. After reading the review, you may want to order a copy for yourself from us.

As indicated in the next article by Jo Ann BeVier, the Unitarian Universalist Association is not large numerically, but does exert a wide influence on the world, especially in the United States. Notice, they do not use the word "church" in their name. Since it is eclectic and non-dogmatic in many ways, it attracts intellectuals and other leaders who desire to appear religious without being spiritual in the Biblical sense and without feeling obligated to Biblical standards.

We have included in this issue a number of responses to the ministry from individuals. Like others serving in the name of Christ, we sometimes wonder if R.A.S. is doing any "good." Are we really helping anyone? Responses such as are in this issue are encouraging. We sometimes receive negative feedback, we expect this, but even these responses let us know others realize we are here and why R.A.S. exists.

Our new 1999-2000 Catalog was sent out a few weeks ago. By now each of you should have received your copy. If not, please let us know by telephone, UPS mail, or e-mail.

PLEASE check your mail label on this issue of The Discerner. If your label reads "XIX-2" (Vol. 19, Nr. 2) your subscription expires with this issue. Renewal is only \$4 per year in the U.S. (because of postage rates, we have to charge more for foreign subscriptions).

As noted on the last inside page, we still are in need of a full-time Office Manager. Our financial situation continues to be that we need a person who is self-supporting. We can afford to move a person or family to the Twin Cities area, but we have no current resources beyond that. This reminds me, we are grateful to those who faithfully support R.A.S. financially and in prayer-both are essential to the ongoing of this ministry.

Theology of Scientology

PART II

By William A. BeVier

The Church of Scientology has a Creed. The copy in my possession has 20 points. Among these are: "...all men have inalienable rights to their own defense." "...the souls of men have the rights of men." "...man is basically good." "...he is seeking to survive (Hubbard claimed this is the essential of humanity)." "...the spirit alone may save or heal the body." God is mentioned twice in the Creed and Christ not at all. Only a Scientologist would know what these statements really mean to them.

Others who have read the theology of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology have their own understanding of what is meant. William Watson says: The "background is science fiction and Buddhism." God really is irrelevant. "Thetans (men's souls) are all gods." "Jesus was not God, but He had a 'strong energy glow.'" "Man's reason will produce perfect behavior." "The Bible is of no use." "Scientology teaches reincarnation" [and incarnation, ed.]. The Thetan has existed for "trillions of years." Salvation comes through auditing sessions, a type of psychoanalysis therapy sessions using an E-meter. (*A Concise Dictionary of Cults and Religions*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1991).

Scientology teaches that all our problems are because of "engrams," which exist in our "reactive minds." These are negative thoughts which come from our prenatal or even past lives. One must be freed from these engrams. After this is done one becomes "clear." Before this happens everyone is a "preclear." One becomes free of the engrams by auditing sessions. During these sessions an "auditor" questions the preclear who is seated facing the auditor and holding the handles of an E-meter.

The E-meter has been described as a simple galvanometer based on the same principle as a lie-detector. The handles held in each hand by the preclear are connected by wires to a low voltage electric source and to a sensitive needle. As the auditor asks questions, the preclear's reactions are recorded by the needle and interpreted by the auditor. The auditor then makes notes of the responses which become part of the preclear's file. Some have testified in courts that these files have been used to threaten, harass, or blackmail them at later dates.

One progresses from preclear to clear (hopefully) through a series of auditing sessions. Each session costs money (and no credit cards

are accepted). Some have reported spending thousands of dollars and never reaching "clear."

Incidentally, the name and current device "E-meter" is copyrighted and patented and only an authorized auditor or Scientologist "minister" can legally use one. E-meters also exist in different models, depending on the level of auditing.

Once one becomes "clear" that is not the end of their development in Scientology. I have in my possession a page the size of eight legal size sheets titled "The Bridge to Total Freedom" which lists the stages one can go through from taking one auditing session up to OTXV. The document is dated 1991. There are 38 steps before one reaches "CLEAR." Then 20 steps beyond before one reaches OTXV. "OT" stands for "Operating Thetan," when one supposedly doesn't need a body to exist and is clear of all "engrams." As stated, each step, with several sessions, involves auditing sessions and costs money (Time, 6 May 1991).

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Unfortunately, one can slip back and has to retake some sessions (at the discretion of one's auditor). It is clearly a never ending process in this life. According to Russell Miller, Hubbard was still having auditing shortly before his death (apparently he could audit himself).

A person soon learns all auditing sessions cannot be taken locally. The higher levels can be taken only at the "Flag Headquarters" in Clearwater, Florida. All of these higher levels are termed "Confidential" and no one is to share information about them with anyone at a lower level or outside Scientology. At the last report, John Travolta had reached OTIV level ("OT Drug Rundown Completion"). Time magazine reported in 1991 it cost \$25,000 to reach OTV-VII (6 May 1991).

The "four-step" recruitment strategy of Scientology also reveals something of its "theology." The steps are stated as :

1. "Contact," be friendly to potential members.
2. "Handle," overcome reservations about Scientology.
3. "Ruin," find vulnerable area in potential member's past, e.g., drugs, sex, crime (auditing sessions can expose these).
4. "Salvage," assure potential member others have overcome similar problems through Scientology (with auditing, of course).

These might be called the "Four Spiritual Laws" of Scientology.

On October 18, 1967 Hubbard issued one of his many policy orders, which read in part: "SP Order. Fair Game. May be deprived of property or injured by any means by any Scientologist without the discipline of the Scientologist. May be tricked, sued or lied to or destroyed" (cited by The Biblical Evangelist, Dec. 1, 1989, p. 12).

In the March 1979 issue of Freedom (Scientology newspaper), Hubbard claimed Scientology a religious philosophy which is an extension of Buddhism and which can attain the goals of Christ.

Such are a few examples of Scientology's "theology."

CRITICS OF SCIENTOLOGY

Critics of Scientology have faced various problems.

In 1971 Paulette Cooper, a journalist, wrote an expose titled The Scandal of Scientology (Tower Publications, Inc.). She claimed, among other things, that Scientology was a combination of psychotherapy and the Roman Catholic confessional. Cooper had 18 different libel suits brought against her by Scientology in 18 different states where her book had been distributed. This required her to hire 18 different lawyers to answer the suits (lawyers usually are licensed to practice only in one state). A piece of her monogrammed stationery was stolen from her apartment and a letter forged in which she supposedly threatened a Scientologist with bodily harm. Scientology sought a criminal indictment. The case was dismissed after Miss Cooper passed a lie detector test. Her publisher, after being threatened with a suit, withdrew her book from circulation. Several years later an FBI raid on a Scientology headquarters found documents supporting Paulette Cooper. But to this time, Paulette Cooper has never written again about Scientology.

At one time Religion Analysis Service and the local Scientology were located in the same building in Minneapolis. One of our former office managers was threatened physically by Scientologists because of what he was saying about them. A later office manager stood many times and watched through adjoining windows across a narrow courtyard Scientology auditing sessions. He described them as being "weird." Early each morning the staff would gather in the hall outside the R.A.S. office and led by a woman would shout in unison responses as she would point at a large chart. In 1968 R.A.S. ran an article about Scientology in The Discerner and Dr. John Dahlin, our editor, was threatened with a law suit if he ever ran another article about them. Yet their Creed states: "That all men have inalienable rights to think

freely, to talk freely, to write freely their own opinions and to counter or utter or write upon the opinions of others.”

Three recent books about Scientology have brought difficulties for the authors from Scientology. Bent Corydon and L. Ron Hubbard, Jr. (a.k.a. Ron DeWolf) published L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman? (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, 1987), then Corydon updated the book with the same title (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, 1992), and Russell Miller wrote Bare-Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard (London: Michael Joseph/Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987). Miller and his publisher were threatened before the book was published, an attempt was made to steal Miller's manuscript while it was at the printer, and after it was published Miller was repeatedly followed by a recognized private investigator known to be hired by Scientology. Miller also had difficulty interviewing former Scientologists in this country because they feared reprisals. A well-known Scientologist tactic is to hire private investigators to follow and to photograph their critics. Many people find this intimidating.

SCIENTOLOGY AND THE COURTS

After Reader's Digest published its first article about Scientology, it was sued. The case dragged on for years before finally being settled in Reader's Digest's favor. Scientology sued Time magazine for \$416 million after its 1991 article. After three years of litigation, a judge finally dismissed the case. Reader's Digest and Time had sufficient money and legal counsel to withstand the suits. Everyone is not that fortunate.

Kurt Van Gorden recently wrote: “The Church of Scientology is the most litigious religion in the history of churches founded in the United States” (The Kingdom of the Cults, 1997, p. 369). No one who knows the history of Scientology would disagree with that statement. Ruth Tucker wrote: “More than any of the other religious or pseudo-religious cults in modern times, Scientology has been the target of police investigations and litigation” (Another Gospel, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989, p. 315).

In August 1979 an Oregon jury awarded a former Scientologist over \$2 million in damages after a 21-day trial. Julie Christofferson Titchbourne claimed Scientology had defrauded her with its claims to help her, then didn't. Scientology appealed the decision. The award was overturned. Then in 1985 the award was reinstated. Again, Scientology appealed. In 1986 a judge overturned the award again, not on the merits of the case but on a technicality.

In 1986 Larry Wollersheim, a former Scientologist, sued for emotional damage inflicted during "auditing." A trial court ordered Scientology to pay \$30 million to Wollersheim. Appeal followed. In 1994 the award was reduced to \$2.5 million, but Scientology still was ordered to pay. Wollersheim had joined the church in 1969.

During the 1960s Scientology and Hubbard came under increasing investigations by various agencies of government both in the U.S. and elsewhere. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) made an ill-conceived raid on a Scientology headquarters in 1963. The pretense was to seize E-meters as fraudulent devices. Thousands of files also were trucked away. Scientology went to court and everything was returned after four years.

In 1966 Hubbard "resigned" as head of Scientology and went to sea to "study and do research." However, large sums of money were still sent to him and in reality he continued to direct the then nearly worldwide organization through directives sent from him. In 1966 he also, as a part of his "reorganization," established what he titled the "Guardian Office" (GO) as his intelligence and counter-intelligence organization. He claimed psychiatry, the KGB (Soviet secret police), the FBI, the CIA, and various media were working together against Scientology (Reader's Digest, May 1980). The "GO" was headed by Mary Sue Hubbard, L. Ron Hubbard's third wife, who was aboard ships with him during this time.

One tactic taught to GO members was to make anonymous telephone calls to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) accusing "enemies" of Scientology of income tax cheating. This was bound to produce an IRS audit, which in reality was no more than a form of harassment of Scientology critics. Evidence of this as found in the 1977 FBI raid.

In 1967 the IRS revoked Scientology's tax exempt status. This began a long series of struggles between the two.

In 1976 two Scientologists using forged credentials, obtained jobs with the IRS and the U.S. Department of Justice (makes one wonder about our national security system). They were able to steal over 15,000 documents before being caught. This was done mostly by entering offices on weekends and using government copiers to duplicate documents. They were caught when they were found one night in a government library carrying forged identification.

This led to a July 8, 1977 FBI raid on two Scientology headquarters (Washington and Los Angeles) and a ship. It took over a year for the FBI to get an indictment. In August 1978 Mary Sue Hubbard and ten other Scientology officials were indicted on 28 counts of conspiracy, theft, etc. L. Ron Hubbard was indicted, but not charged — he could not be found. Hubbard, after the raid, abandoned his wife and disap-

peared from the public. It was long thought he had boarded a ship and moved into international waters. Russell Miller has since verified that Hubbard really hid out in California and Nevada, frequently moving about with a few trusted followers and continuing to direct his various organizations. This went on for seven years, until the statute of limitations expired on the indictment, then he reappeared in public.

After Mary Sue and the others were indicted and charged, Scientology lawyers filed a \$7.5 million lawsuit against 165 FBI agents by name and two U.S district attorneys involved in the raids. This suit they lost, but it was costly in money and time for the government to defend itself.

A Federal judge in Washington, DC declared the July 1977 raid there illegal and the seized documents (classified ones included) had to be returned to Scientology. A Federal judge in Los Angeles declared the raid legal and the case went forward.

The criminal trial began in September 1979. At that time Mary Sue Hubbard and the others were permitted to "plea bargain." The 28 charges were reduced to one charge of conspiracy. Eight of the 11 charged pled guilty. It should be remembered, even when plea bargaining, the defendants retain the right of appeal when sentenced to prison or fined. Plea bargaining is something like: I plead guilty, but if I don't like the sentence, I'll appeal. If one gets probation, probably no appeal. If sentenced to prison, probably an appeal. On appeal a sentence may be reduced, or overturned, but never increased.

During her trial, Mary Sue Hubbard claimed she should not be imprisoned because of poor health — which was unknown prior to the trial.

When Mary Sue and the others were convicted, they immediately appealed and in January 1980 released on bail.

The final conviction after appeal was in January 1983, for a trial which followed a raid in 1977. Mary Sue's original sentence was five years, reduced to four years, eligible for parole after 40 months. Mrs. Hubbard, then age 51, told the last judge she had "retired" from the Church of Scientology in 1981 (but this was after her conviction). L. Ron Hubbard was still no place to be found during his wife's lengthy trial.

Scientology also has had legal troubles in Australia, Great Britain, Greece, Spain, Canada, the Netherlands, and Portugal,

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among other places. While Hubbard's ships were visiting European ports at one time or another they were expelled from Greece, Spain, and Portugal (see Miller). In 1968 the British Secretary of Health investigated Scientology and reported Scientology: "A socially harmful, pseudo-philosophical cult" (Rudin and Rudin, Prison or Paradise, 1980, p. 95). Scientologists were banned. Scientology went to court. In 1979, on a final appeal, the British High Court lifted the ban. However, recognized Scientologists who have attempted to enter England since 1979 have been refused visas. The Foreign Office reports the ban is "under review." The High Court has taken no further action. At one time Hubbard moved his international headquarters to England (Cf., to avoid "harassment" in the U.S.). He purchased a former manor and castle in Sussex, England. Scientology apparently still owns the facilities, but the international headquarters has been moved back to the United States.

Scientology's legal troubles still continue. The German government has ruled Scientology detrimental to society. John Travolta, a prominent Scientologist, even traveled to Germany to intercede. The official German government response was to resent "American actors" interfering with Germany's internal affairs. Public cries have been to boycott Travolta's and his associates' films in Germany.

Currently Scientology faces two legal cases, one criminal one civil, involving the death of a Scientologist woman in Clearwater, Florida (see the Internet for current developments). Scientology has bought several prominent pieces of real estate in Clearwater, e.g., paid over \$3 million in cash for the purchase of the former Fort Harrison hotel. The hotel is now "Flag Service Organization" headquarters and where the woman supposedly died. Scientology claims the city leaders of Clearwater are on a vendetta against them, hence the current criminal case. The properties are, of course, taken off the tax rolls. The civil case was brought by the woman's parents who live in Texas. They are charging wrongful death in the case of their daughter. The criminal case involves illegal practice of medicine and neglect based on a coroner's report.

Scientology also has obtained other pieces of prominent real estate. For example, some years ago they purchased the former Cedar of Lebanon Hospital in Hollywood, California for \$5 million, again in cash. This is now Scientology's "Celebrity Centre International."

SCIENTOLOGY AND CELEBRITIES

Several years before his death in January 1986, L. Ron Hubbard put out a directive to his followers to make a special effort to win

celebrities to Scientology. Since Hubbard's words and writings were considered "scripture" to true Scientologists, they went to work to carry out his will.

There is enough of "New Age" aspects in Scientology that some people are attracted to it. Others seem to always relate to something new and different and Scientology fitted their desires. The entertainment world has more than its share in both areas.

The concerted effort to win celebrities was to a measure successful. The Celebrity Centre in Hollywood served as a focal point. Scientology's social programs of drug rehabilitation and criminal rehabilitation (with auditing, of course) attracted some. The Purification Program promises to rid a person of "environmental poisons."

Celebrities who identify themselves as Scientologists include John Travolta, Karen Black, Jennifer Aspen, Isaac Hayes, Kirstie Alley, Tom Cruise, Priscilla Presley, and the late Sonny Bono (Scientology's "representative" in the U.S. Congress).

Some claim Scientology has helped them. John Travolta, a member for over 20 years, and an outspoken supporter of Scientology, has become involved in a suit brought by a homosexual artist. The artist, Michael Pattison, claims Travolta was "cured" of homosexuality by Scientology. The proof is he has married an actress, Kelly Preston. Pattison's complaint is after 25 years and \$500,000 given to Scientology, he is still homosexual (Internet, rickross.com/reference/Scien58.html).

Kirstie Alley asserts she was delivered from substance abuse by Scientology. Others claim similar "cures."

Mary Bono, Sonny Bono's widow and currently a member of the U.S. Congress in her former husband's place, has taken several Scientology courses (Internet. Rickross.com/reference/Scien73.html).

Travolta took out an advertisement in German newspapers recently, signed by 34 individuals, including Dustin Hoffman, Goldie Hawn, director Oliver Stone, author Mario Puzo, and talk show host Larry King critical of the way German government, state and federal, were reacting to Scientology. The ad equated Germany's treatment of Scientologists "...with the persecution of the Jews during the Holocaust." As could be expected, many Germans reacted negatively to the ad ([American Jewish World](#), Jan. 24, 1997, p. 11).

SOURCES

This is in reality only a brief presentation of L. Ron Hubbard and Scientology.

Increasingly Christians and non-Christians are reacting against Scientology, and true to its history, Scientology is fighting back.

References were made in the introduction to these articles to such magazines as Reader's Digest, Time, Newsweek, and American Mercury. Christian periodicals such as Christianity Today and the newspaper Minnesota Christian Chronicle have carried articles about Scientology.

Christian books on the cults also have chapters or sections on Scientology. For example, The Kingdom of the Cults, Hank Hanegraaff, General Editor, 1997; Ruth A. Tucker, Another Gospel, 1989; William Watson, A Concise Dictionary of Cults and Religions, 1991; Bob Larson, Larson's New Book of the Cults, 1989; and J. Gordon Melton, Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America, 1986. Watchman Fellowship of Arlington, Texas has published a 4-page profile on the Church of Scientology.

Two works by secular writers are Bent Coryden's L. Ron Hubbard, Messiah or Madman?, 1992 and Russell Miller's Bare-Faced Messiah: the True Story of L. Ron Hubbard, 1987. One is advised that in both of these works Hubbard frequently is quoted verbatim and any Christian will find his words vulgar, obscene, and offensive.

The most up-to-date information on Scientology can be found on the Internet. A number of individuals have taken it upon themselves to provide ongoing happenings in the organization. Some of these pages are by Christians, some are not. Scientology has long waged conflicts with secular journalists and non-Scientology journalists have joined the battle.

Literally thousands of website pages exist on Scientology. Many are free for downloading. Russell Miller's 375 page book is available on the Internet. A "Scientology" Search will lead to an abundance of information. If one desires to pursue this subject further and does not have personal access to the Internet, most public libraries have computers and helpful staff available. Too, most of us at least know someone with sufficient computer ability to provide current information on Scientology and its founder.

L. Ron Hubbard was an unusual person. He was resourceful, had a fantastic imagination, and was able to surround himself at least for a time with very devoted followers. Still, these articles have hopefully established his many failures and presented the man and his organization, at least briefly, as they really were and are.

After years of litigation, the IRS recently restored its tax-exempt status to the Church of Scientology. But it should be noted, the “Church of Scientology” is only one part of the overall organization Scientology. In a 40-page brief issued by a United States Claims Court in June 1992 there is a list of 35 different organizations as a part of Scientology (Internet. www.primenet.com/~cultx-pt/costirs.htm).

A frightening example of Scientology tactics recently took place. Cult Awareness Network, an anticult and deprogramming ministry, was forced into bankruptcy. The reports are that a Scientology lawyer represented the plaintiffs against Cult Awareness Network. After the bankruptcy, a Scientologist bought the group’s name, phone number and furnishings and began answering calls to Cult Awareness Network (Pioneer Press, Sat., Dec. 12, 1998, quoted from the Dallas Morning News). It is no wonder the Watchman Expositor titled one of its articles: “Church of Scientology: A Religious Mafia?” (Vol. 15, No. 1 1998, p. 5).

The Disastrous Defection in the Protestant Pulpit Today

A Call for Discernment and Intercession

By David L. Larsen

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but, after their own lusts, shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” 2 Timothy 4:3-4

The false cults have no real use for the Bible and quite consistently, do not write commentaries on the text of Scripture. Modern religious liberalism has long since turned from the Bible to topical and moralistic preaching of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man or to some faddish adaptation of narrative theology. But most sadly, among many who have treasured Biblical and expository preaching over the years there has come a disastrous defection which very much resembles what the Apostle Paul long ago described to Timothy as an unwillingness to “endure sound doctrine.”

In a vain hope to avoid the offense of the Gospel of Christ (who said “if they have hated me, they will hate you” John 15:18-19), many among us have dedicated themselves to being “user-friendly” above all. The title of a recent influential book is Entertainment Evangelism. Of course while we should not wish to add any offense of our own to the Gospel, the great peril of the hour is the horizontalization and psychologization of preaching. The transcendent God is domesticated and theology becomes anthropology. So as not to offend, there is no emphasis on judgment, wrath, hell, sin, repentance or (as inevitable follows) the cross of Christ itself as the place of a redemptive sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Thus well-meaning evangelical preachers in their eagerness to be audience-centered and need-driven pay little attention to the exegesis of the text and leap too quickly over the text to stories and applications of a practical nature. Of course the broken and hurting lives out there call for Christian address, but unless our foundations are in the mighty redemptive acts of God in Christ our well-intentioned application will be little more than good advice or moralism. We must work in Ephesians 1-3 before we move to the application in Ephesians 4-6. Romans 1-11 with its peerless and incomparable doctrinal development is absolutely prior to the practical application set forth in Romans 12-16. The current move away from sound theology and the

contemporary minimizing of doctrine do not augur well for the future. A careful inspection of the history of preaching over the centuries shows that when the text of Scripture is subordinated to application or anything else, the results are disastrous. The Biblical text must be sovereign and king under God, yielding to nothing else.

The history of preaching underscores the fact that our view of the Bible determines our view of the importance and nature of preaching. If we truly believe that the Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God then our sermons must be text-driven and text-shaped. Only this commitment will sustain fidelity to the Gospel of Christ and His saving work on Calvary. The sad reality is that avoidance of sound doctrine soon unravels and becomes the denial of sound doctrine. Practitioners of preaching and concerned listeners need to be aware of what is taking place among us. In one district of an evangelical denomination, I have been told by a reputable witness that half of the ministers have moved from text-driven preaching to need-driven and audience centered preaching. Do we recognize what is taking place in our time?

Of course we are not indifferent to where our hearers are. Indeed in 98% of the speaking portions of Jesus in the gospels we have an indication of who His audience is. It is necessary to exegete our times and understand the "culture wars" raging about us, but endless preoccupation with analyses of the builders, the boomers, the busters, the bubbles can drive us right out of our skulls. Paul was not indifferent to his audience and their situation, but he was undeterred in his commitment to preaching "Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

We Americans are very vulnerable to the appeal of the new style in evangelical preaching. There has been from early on in our history the emergence of what has been "the American religion," a vigorous narcissistic "self-ism." It is a kind of Emersonian gnosticism and found early embodiment in Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous piece entitled Self-Reliance. This is an experiential religion with a vengeance. This religion is impatient with theology and totally misses the meaning of conversion and revival. "The self is the truth" Emerson insisted and wistfully hoped for a new saviour from the West. The poet of the American religion is of course Walt Whitman in Leaves of Grass in which he celebrates the "self" and rhapsodizes "I sing of myself" (not surprising the book that William Jefferson Clinton gave to Monica Lewinsky). Historically Mormonism is not far from this religion with their fusion of God and man in their "exalted man" theology. Notice that there is no place for the cross of Christ in any Mormon architecture.

Tragically when Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Joseph Parker and H. P. Liddon were boldly and powerfully preaching the Word of God in London in the last century, where are their counterparts on the

American scene? The three great American pulpiteers in that century are generally seen to be Horace Bushnell, Henry Ward Beecher and Phillips Brooks, all of whom were Emersonian and not one of whom believed in the substitutionary atonement of Christ. You put the “amiable antinomianism” of Emerson along with Harvard pragmatism (if it works, it is true) and marry them to “Manifest Destiny” (the notion that America is the New Israel on this continent), you have a tradition in preaching that continued in Norman Vincent Peale and still sounds in the platitudes of Robert Schuller (who long ago bid good-bye to Paul’s teaching on sin in Romans and who no longer wants to be called a “Christian” because it cuts him off from Hindus and Muslims).

Do we not see what is happening? The Christian Church has always found it necessary to be “against culture” (Romans 12:2; 1 John 2:15) in order to win culture. The trend away from truly Biblical preaching in our pulpits today is ominous. At issue is not only the reliability of Scripture but the sufficiency of Scripture. Are The Tales of Dracula as legitimate a source of youth materials as is Scripture as one nationally prominent youth evangelist tells us? Are darling “veggie-tales” going to take the place of the Bible stories? What are the images we want to linger in young minds? Paul sounded an alarm long ago which we need to hear: “It is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11).

BOOK REVIEW

Y2K: A Reasoned Response to Mass Hysteria

By Dave Hunt

Reviewed by Leslie E. Buege

By now I'm sure everyone has heard about the Y2K computer bug. Many of you have probably formed an opinion already as to its expected effect on your lives beginning on Jan 1, 2000. For those of you who haven't paid that much attention to this subject, I offer the following description and its effect on computers. Y2K stands for the "Year 2000." The Y2K bug is a software flaw that can cause computers to believe it's the year 1900 when it's really 2000. In the early days of computers, when computer memory was scarce and expensive, programmers would use only the last two digits of a year to represent the full four digits. As an example, 99 would be interpreted as 1999 by the computer when the computer program would add it to the value of 1900. Therefore, 00 could incorrectly be interpreted as the year 1900 and not the year 2000. Without changes being made to the computer programs to correct this problem, it is firmly believed by many that on Jan 1, 2000, computers around the world will crash and bring about an almost indescribable global disaster. This is because so much of our lives depend on computers operating accurately and efficiently. One computer crashing can easily affect many other computers because of the interrelationship of many of the computers in both government and industry.

This is a book that is badly needed to bring a sense of balance to the grim picture that many are saying will happen on January 1, 2000 because of their belief in a world wide catastrophe of computers crashing. Many are Christians, or claim to be, which cause many Christians to take notice to what they are saying or writing. Many of you already know that Dave Hunt is a meticulous writer who thoroughly researches his subject matter. This is no less apparent in his latest book. This book is 286 pages long. Fourteen of its pages, or about 5%, are endnotes. This means that much of this book contains quotations and references to source material that he uses. As a retired machine designer, I have worked for over 40 years in the field of engineering. I can relate to how Dave finds it necessary to gather information and facts from many sources before making an assessment on a particular issue.

In the first chapter titled "Worldwide Chaos and Disaster?", Dave looks at what many of the self proclaimed experts are saying will hap-

pen, including a national loss of electrical power. This loss of electricity would affect the city's water supplies, gas pumps at service stations (or convenient stores), telephone services and many others. He explains how misinformation, some because it is old, is being used by the alarmists. At no time does Dave minimize what could happen if nothing is done to solve the Y2K problem. Throughout the book he explains what has already been done and what is being done to fix the Y2K problem. I believe that one of the biggest motivations in fixing the Y2K problems is the potential of liability law suits. Dave addresses this issue in a later chapter. I don't think that any manager wants to be responsible for a law suit against his or her company that could result in that person losing his or her job, and possibly causing his or her company to go bankrupt.

In chapter two, "Panic, Stock Up, and Arm?", Dave says that "The difficulty we all face, however, is to make enough sense out of contradictory reports and opinions to come to a definite and timely conclusion and to act on it."

He gives an example of some of the extremism that is being heard in regard to the Y2K computer problem. He tells how that, "according to Jack Van Impe, this whole Y2K problem is one huge and very clever satanic plot." He goes on to say that Van Impe says that Satan "is the prince of the power of...electricity, the current! And that's why we wrestle against evil, wicked spirits in high places (Ephesians 6:12)...." Dave further quotes Van Impe as saying: "I believe that the one who causes all this mass confusion is the Satanic being who has power over, the atmosphere, over space...and, yes I want to repeat it, electricity!"

A very important point Hunt makes is that it is often overlooked that the alarmists will use words like "if" or "unless" or "could" before going on to describe what happens on Jan 1, 2000 and the days to follow. Dave gives an example of this in a report dated Oct. 22, 1997 which stated: "*Unless* timely corrective action is taken to address the Year 2000 problem, the Social Security Administration (SSA), like other federal agencies, *could* face critical computer system failures at the turn of the century" [italic emphasis added by Dave Hunt]. He says that many, if not most, would interpret this to mean "...that corrective action won't be taken and that there will be critical computer system failures in SSA . The fact is that SSA became compliant more than a year before the deadline."

He explains a major reason he "cannot believe the scenario of doom being promoted is the fierce competition among power plants, automakers, banks, credit card companies, and others in business to make money." He says he continues to learn about new techniques that are being developed that automatically and rapidly find and fix

the Y2K computer problems. He says that companies and government "know what the problem is and how to fix it, and they are working diligently at doing so." The alarmists, he says, "refuse to believe that American ingenuity, determination and competitiveness will win the day." He says that companies can't afford to let their competitors operate more efficiently than they. I personally know that the large company that I worked for before retiring has been working on the Y2K problem for over two years now. One of my sons works for a major national bank as a computer network administrator. He tells me that they have been working on the problem since before 1997, and all of their mission's critical applications are Y2K compliant now.

In chapter three, "Could It Really Be That Bad?", Dave addresses some of the issues that the Department of Defense faces. One such concern is the potential breach of security if outsiders are used to fix their computer systems. He covers the progress that has been made and some of the solutions being used such as "windowing." This is a temporary solution where the computer clock is turned back 28 years. In this chapter Dave says that most of the alarmists are "far from backing off in the face of encouraging developments" and were "actually toughening their position." He says that "One reason for the perpetual pessimism is the recycling of outdated information." Examples of this are given. And, of course, there is big money to be made on a "one-in-a-millennium" opportunity of selling newsletters, books, and even survival materials.

Chapter four, "A Calm Appraisal," is a chapter where Dave answers many of the arguments against a Y2K disaster with statements from experts in industry from companies like Boeing and Hewlett-Packard. He closes this chapter by saying that he believes "that evidence and sound reason indicate that Y2K is not going to create the total disaster which so many are predicting." He says "There will be problems, but most will amount to little more than a bothersome nuisance that will be dealt with as each arises, though in some cases with considerable distress—which could have been avoided by common sense preparation."

In chapters six and seven, "The Church's Finest Hour? Or Greatest Folly?" and "A Biblical Rejection of Y2K Disaster," Dave looks at what many Christians see as an opportunity for evangelism, especially with their neighbors. A major mistake is being made by believing this is going to be a prophetic event of disastrous proportions. By stockpiling food, water, and other essentials to be shared with their neighbors who haven't prepared for the Y2K disaster, they hope to lead many to Christ. Many are taking their cue from an interdenominational ministry called the "Joseph Project 2000." This ecumenical ministry has been promoted by popular Christians such as James Dobson and Larry Burkett. The movement's purpose is to cre-

ate Christian leadership in communities so that the church is being perceived to be the answer on Y2K. Dave says that the Bible and our Lord will be discredited if after warning of a Y2K disaster, it doesn't materialize. He says: "This is especially true if they have connected Y2K with Bible prophecy and God's judgment—and that is exactly what many Christians are doing."

By using the Bible and some simple logic, Dave does a good job of refuting their connection with Biblical prophecy. I don't agree with his application of some of the verses he uses, but I do with most of them. (I practice being a good Berean also)

In chapter seven "A Contrary Scenario," there are some interesting facts about what the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is doing. I also learned in this chapter that Prudential began to address the Y2K issue back in 1995. Have you heard about the embedded computer chip problem? Maybe it isn't as big a problem that it's made out to be. Read Dave's interview with one of the top computer experts in the country and learn how he accesses the Y2K problem. Dave mentions one of his books Peace, Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust where he went contrary to what the doomsayers were predicting in 1983. They were proven wrong. He said in that book he based his conclusions "...upon the absolute confidence that God's word accurately foretells the climax of the history of this world as we have known it." He has done the same in this book.

In chapter eight, "The Christian Response," Dave says that Christians are to be good Bereans as the Apostle Paul instructed. He says this principle should not only apply to understanding the Bible but also for discerning the truth regarding Y2K so you don't blindly accept what someone [including Dave Hunt] has to say. Also in this chapter, Dave takes the opportunity to reach out to the unbeliever, who may be reading this book, by using some good Biblical truths that keep with the theme of his book. At the conclusion of this chapter, Dave says he is concerned that there may be a panic-driven run on banks and food markets which would bring further hysteria. He expects there to be an aggressive media campaign by the government to prevent this from happening by assuring the public that all will be well. Dave does say that preparations should be taken in case there is panic and suggests some things everyone should do.

In conclusion, I believe this is a "must read" book not only for the wealth of information it contains, but also because it should teach you how to examine the Y2K information as it continues to unfold.

[R.A.S. carries this book. 286 pp. TP-26 \$9.95 + p&h]

Unitarian Universalism

By Jo Ann BeVier

This group is known as the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) and although not the largest or best-known "Religious" group (statistics in 1997-98 showing 211,597 members and 1,034 congregations) it is "politically correct," and attracting more interest and questions recently at our R.A.S. office. More than 500,000 Americans consider themselves Unitarian Universalists although they are not registered members.

It is a broad-brushed organization which tolerates and encourages "alternative lifestyles" and beliefs which include theists, neo-pagans, liberal "Christians," atheists and more.

The names Unitarian and Universalist indicate that they were established as separate groups which merged in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA).

The Unitarian movement started during the 16th century Reformation and spread from Poland (and Transylvania) to England and then to America.

The Universalists spread from England to America in the 18th century. They taught that God would save every human being, rejecting the doctrine of eternal punishment.

The two groups in America merged in 1961. The organization (the UUA) is often referred to in short as Unitarians.

This organization should not be confused with Unity School of Christianity founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore in 1889, or the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon.

Unitarians consider Michael Servetus, a Spanish physician, the founder of the movement. After escaping from the Roman Catholic Inquisition in France, he went to Geneva to propagate his anti-Trinitarian beliefs. He was recognized and after a three-month trial was burned alive in 1553. This generated interest and the anti-Trinitarian party was organized under the leadership of Faustus Socinus (1539-1604), an Italian who moved to Poland known as the author of Socianism. His followers were once known as the Minor Reformed Church. Under Jesuit persecution they were forced out of Poland. At this time, some merged with Unitarians in Transylvania and Hungary and are still active today. Unitarianism spread to England where John Biddle is known as the father of English

Unitarianism. It didn't flourish until the 19th century and in 1925 they formed the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

In the American colonies in the 17th century Unitarianism was outlawed and not until the late 18th century did they begin to make inroads into established churches (especially the Congregational churches).

The Universalists founded the first Universalist church in America in 1779 led by John Murray, calling it the Independent Christian Church. There were at least two others who had preached Universalist doctrines before Murray came on the scene.

The movement (UUA) is a highly intellectual group (49% are college graduates). Transcendentalism is an offshoot of Unitarianism, as is humanism. The Unitarian-Universalists have been, and are, very influential in the U.S. to mention some: Four Presidents (John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Millard Fillmore, and William Taft); a founder of our nation, Benjamin Rush; eight Supreme Court Justices (including Oliver Wendell Holmes); famous literary figures Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Cullen Bryant, Henry David Thoreau, Horace Greeley, etc.; famous women, Louisa May Alcott, Clara Barton, Florence Nightingale, Susan B. Anthony; architect Frank Lloyd Wright; and other noted individuals such as P. T. Barnum.

The Unitarian-Universalists say the following things about themselves (on their Internet website):

We are a liberal religion born of Jewish and Christian traditions. We believe that personal experience, conscience and reason should be final authorities in religion. Religious authority lies not in a book or person or institution, but in ourselves. We will not be bound by a statement of belief. We do not ask anyone to subscribe to a creed. Ours is a noncredal religion. We believe that human understanding of life and death, the world and its mysteries, is never final. Revelation is continual. We believe people should be encouraged to think for themselves.

In their churches are agnostics, humanists, atheists, nature worshippers, pantheists, and some who affirm a personal God. Most do not believe in a supernatural, supreme being. The Bible is a myth. They do not believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, performed miracles, or was resurrected from the dead. Unitarian Universalists reject the Christian belief that the original sin of Adam is inherited by all. They believe in "salvation by character." They do not believe in an afterlife (heaven or hell). They practice pluralism—a wide variety of beliefs: humanism, liberal Christian theism, non-Christian theism, pantheistic belief systems (i.e., new age, neo-paganism, and goddess

worship, and other forms of earth-centered "spirituality"). They regard themselves as "religious liberals," though not as Christians.

They support same-sex marriage, homosexuality, abortion on demand, radical feminism, tolerance of alternative lifestyles, doctor-assisted suicide, etc.

One of a number of independent affiliated organizations is: Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagan (CUUPS) which was founded for the purpose of "promoting neo-pagan, earth-centered spirituality with the UUA."

The headquarters of UUA is in Boston, MA. They are now actively seeking converts ("evangelism") which was not done in the past because of their ideals of tolerance and pluralism. They are using "church growth" strategies. One group being targeted are the "baby boomers."

As one can see by reading this article this is certainly a movement to be informed and concerned about. Surely we must be ready to give an answer to those who would be far from the truth.

Much of our information comes from the book, Unitarian Universalism by Alan W. Gomes. We highly recommend this book for discernment purposes (it is listed in the R.A.S. Catalog).

RESPONSES

Words of encouragement are a blessing and a boost to morale for a ministry like R.A.S.

Not everyone agrees with the materials carried or the articles printed in The Discerner, but responses from those who know about us and who take the time to let us hear from them add to our effectiveness.

When R.A.S. can make a difference in a life—and especially to be used to lead people out of a cult or give information that will give them answers to their questions is reward enough.

The following are just a few responses we would share with you. We do receive negative responses, and we read them with care.

Regarding The Discerner. . .

“A very informative and useful publication. I just wish it was monthly. Keep up the good work.”

MK from West Virginia

“Thank you for the DISCERNER which I have received for many years now. With the increase in cults and isms, it is a valuable magazine to warn of such errors.”

SB from Iowa

“I would like to thank you for your past help with your positive influence in encouraging me to leave The International Church of Christ.”

JB from Minnesota

“Thank you for issue June 1998 of THE DISCERNER and comments contained therein. I am still alive—aged 86—and living on an ex-service pension ‘war caused.’

I enjoy receiving your publication and thank you for your advice and help over the years, particularly after the war when I was distressed.

These days our faith is all the more important when we hear of so much trouble going on. We all need a yardstick by which to live—a standard—and keep to it.”

RL from Western Australia

"The most recent issue of THE DISCERNER came yesterday and I think the little periodical is getting better and better.

Recent issues have been timely. I praise God for the ministry you continue to have."

DL from Illinois

"I stopped by your office one day last summer and shared how R.A.S. has been used of God in several ways in my life.

I was introduced to Religion Analysis Service when as a boy I learned that one of my sisters had become involved in the Baha'i cult. Although my parents were Christians we were not in a church where the Gospel was preached so my mother prayed and someone told us about Religion Analysis. God used the truth of the materials that we obtained from Religion Analysis to pierce the blindness that had gripped my sister's heart.

Many times since, the sound literature which has come from Religion Analysis has given me Godly instruction on a wide variety of areas including Charismatic false teaching, music, and Eternal Security, not to mention numerous tracts which helped in leading others out of brushes with cults.

To realize just what Religion Analysis Service offers to Christians, just stop for a moment and consider the value God places on one human SOUL. The shepherd who left the 99 and searched for the one lost sheep is a picture of God just the moment before He saved each of us. He could have said "that's enough!" just before we were saved, but He didn't. He's not willing that any should perish. If our Savior hates the Devil's tentacles (false teaching) that much, then we need to as well."

DM from Oregon

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Office Manager for Religion Analysis Service. Office located in the Twin Cities area. Desire is for a person who is a retired Christian worker interested in serving with an anti-cult ministry. Telephone 1-800-562-9153 for more information.

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