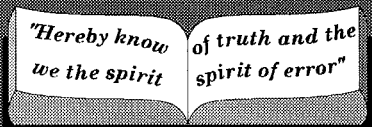


The Discerner



Volume 19, Number 3

July • August • September 1999

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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Editorial Committee

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

We are once more attempting to provide our readers with a variety of subject articles by a variety of writers. The articles in this issue could be considered a departure from the types presented in past issues. However, it is believed all of these subjects are relevant for today, though one or more may not appear of interest to some individuals. I suggest you carefully read all the articles, and though an article may not seem pertinent to you today, file the topic away in your memory. You may want this information in the future. We frequently have a person contact us with a question about a subject that may have appeared in The Discerner years ago. Sometimes they can't remember when or the exact title, but they know we presented the subject one time. We are glad to provide the past articles when we can identify them.

Our first article in this issue should concern all Bible-believing American citizens. Our government has become so tolerant that Wicca, long associated with witchcraft, is now accepted and endorsed by the U.S. military. We have received permission to reprint the article by LTC Robert L. Maginnis, USA, Ret., which first appeared in the publication "Military Readiness Project" by the Family Research Council. LTC Maginnis is currently Director of the Military Readiness Project of the Family Research Council located in Washington, DC. We admit the subject has a special interest to both the President and Vice President of Religion Analysis Service not only because it relates to the cults/occult, but also because we both are retired military chaplains. If you are interested in learning more about Wicca, we stock a book on the subject by William Schnoebelen (D1-52 in our Catalog).

Our second article presents a rather new and somewhat surprising development, the inroads of the New Age Movement into the Roman Catholic Church. However, history has proven that the Roman Catholic Church can and has absorbed many non-Christian concepts without being essentially changed itself. For an organization which claims to be non-changing, it has demonstrated itself to be very adaptable to foreign elements. The author of this article is new to The Discerner but she is published in other periodicals. It should be noted, we have made minor editorial changes to her original article in order to have it fit our style and format. I ask her forgiveness.

As promised in our last issue, we are pleased to present another article by Dr. David L. Larsen, Professor Emeritus of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Another writer who again appears in this issue is Thomas D. Sheehey. His article is a warning against being deceived by Oneness Pentecostalism, also known as the "Jesus Only" movement, and their leaders. This is one of several groups who, for one reason or another, wants and expects to be accepted as "Christian." With the urge some people seem to have for unity and harmony (at the expense of Biblical truth), we need to be alert to these movements and groups.

Our issue this time concludes with a review of an important new book (1998) by Dr. Robert P. Lightner. The book is another call for discernment, we are not to confuse God who has revealed Himself in the Bible with any other so-called god or gods. We currently stock this book (\$10.95 + P & H, 216 pp.).

We ask that you continue to pray for the ministry of R.A.S. — in fact, right now is a good time to do it. There are many people who have spiritual needs and are being troubled by the cults. We also continue to need an office manager to head up this ministry.

If your address label reads Vol. 19, Nr. 3 (XIX-3) your subscription expires with this issue. Renewal costs only \$4 a year in the U.S.

Brewing Up Trouble: WICCA and the U.S. Military

By Lt. Col. Robert L. Maginnis (U.S. Army, Ret.)

Wicca received official recognition as a religion in 1996 from the Department of Defense. Today, there are at least five officially recognized military Wiccan congregations (Kim Sue Lia Perkes, "Wiccans becoming more at home in military," *The Dallas Morning News*, May 29, 1999, p. 1G. Wiccans have congregations at Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Wainwright, Alaska; Fort Polk, La; Kadena Air Base in Okinawa; and Fort Barrancas in Pensacola, Fla.). The Pentagon should withdraw recognition of Wicca for readiness reasons.

Objections to the military's recognition of Wiccans fall in two categories: One, any fringe religion will now have to be granted special benefits by DOD; too, Wicca will undermine readiness factors such as military values, adherence to norms, willingness to kill, and recruitment and retention among the majority who hold a generally theistic worldview and regard witchcraft as an abomination.

The presence of minority religious views is not at issue in this controversy. Christians have served in the military in good faith with Muslims and Jews. These religions share a monotheistic and creationist consensus about the "law of nature and nature's God," as understood by the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Because Wicca represents a direct challenge to this widely shared theism, it would work against military discipline, order, and readiness.

Wicca represents a direct affront to Christian and Jewish teaching. The Bible condemns all forms of witchcraft and sorcery throughout the Old and New Testament (Leviticus 19:26, 31 and 20:6; Deuteronomy 18:10-12; 2 Kings 17:10-17; and 23:4-7, 24-25; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Acts 13:6-12 and 16:16-18; Galatians 5:19-21; and Revelation 9:20-21).

U.S. Representative Bob Barr, a Georgia Republican, has asked the services to stop sanctioning the practice of witchcraft on military bases. Barr argues that allowing such celebrations sets "a dangerous precedent" that could lead to "all sorts of bizarre practices being supported by the military under the rubric of religion." ("No Witching Hour for Barr," News Briefs, *Army Times*, June 7, 1999). Already, DOD has granted special benefits to other unconventional religious groups. Military members of the native American church, for example, can legally use the illegal hallucinogenic drug peyote in their on-

base religious ceremonies. ("Military OKs Using Peyote, Indians Say," Associated Press, *Dallas Morning News*, June 21, 1999. In the April 28, 1997, edition of *Navy Times*, Karen Jowers reported, "In 1994, Congress passed a law allowing authorized American Indians to use the drug [peyote] in religious ceremonies. Since last summer, defense officials have been writing regulations that would set out guidelines for the military.").

MILITARY SUPPORT OF RELIGION AND WICCA

The U.S. military has always supported religion. On July 29, 1775, George Washington "established the [chaplain] corps behind the idea that chaplains brought with them morality and ethics, and that was

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important in dealing with the forces." (Marcia Jackson, "Chaplain Corps celebrates 221st birthday," *ArmyLINK News*, July 18, 1996, <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/news/Jul1996/a19960718chap.html>). Today, the chaplain corps seeks to meet the needs of a very diverse uniformed population.

In 1998, the Defense Manpower Data Center found that most servicemembers identify with the Christian faith: 330,703 Roman Catholic; 252,855 Baptist (not including Southern Baptist); 43,056 Lutheran; 40,053 Methodist; 25,833 Southern Baptist Convention; 62,063 Protestant but with no denominational preference; and 96,259 labeling themselves Christian with no denominational preference. Twenty percent (282,836) have "no religious preference." Other religious preferences include Judaism (3,913), Muslim (4,080), Buddhism (2,228). No Wiccans were identified. (Jack Weible, "A Smorgasbord of Religions," *Army Times*, July 13, 1998).

Military regulations provide a process for religious groups without chaplains to gain access to base facilities for the purpose of conducting services. The qualification process requires that the group must be a recognized religion, military members must request the service and there must be evidence that assigned chaplains cannot meet the "specific theological/denominational requirements of [the] group" ("Distinctive Faith Group Leaders, Certification Process," U.S. Army Training Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia, <http://www-tradoc.monroe.army.mil/chaplain/dsl.htm>, accessed June 22, 1999).

The U.S. government has recognized Wicca and has given it tax-exempt status as a religious organization. In fact, according to one website, "Wiccan priests and priestesses have been given access to penitentiaries" ("Witchcraft and Wicca," <http://www.religioustolerance.org/witchcra.htm>, accessed June 22, 1999).

In August 1997, Wicca "high priest" David Oringderff, with the Sacred Well Congregation of San Antonio, helped set up the military's first Wicca Open Circle at Fort Hood near Austin, Texas. The Wicca Open Circle at Fort Hood has perhaps 300 members, about 100 of whom attend regularly (Perkes, *op cit.*). Oringderff has helped set up congregations at four other bases as well (*Ibid.*).

The Army defends its decision to support Wicca. *U.S. News and World Report* explains,

For today's heterogeneous U.S. Army, the practice is basically business as usual. "As far as we are concerned, they are a religious organization providing for the spiritual needs of our soldiers," says Lt. Col. Benjamin Santos, Fort Hood spokesman, explaining the Army's decision to sanction the practice on bases (Joe Holley, "A genuine witch hunt," *U.S. News and World Report*, June 14, 1999, p. 27).

Navy Captain Russell Gunter, executive director of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board at the Pentagon, also supports Wiccans at Fort Hood. The military is obligated, said Gunter, to respect the religious needs of its members without passing judgment (Perkes, *op cit.*).

BACKGROUND OF WICCA

Witchcraft, also known as Wicca, the craft, or the craft of the wise, is a religion with roots in the ancient pagan religions of northern Europe. Modern witchcraft is a reconstruction of the older versions, based on writings by anthropologist Margaret Murray (1863-1963) — *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1933) — and by British civil servant and world traveler Gerald Gardner (1884-1964) — *Witchcraft Today* (1954) and *The Meaning of Witchcraft* (1959) (Craig S. Hawkins, "The Modern World of Witchcraft," *Christian Research Journal*, Winter/Spring 1990, p. 8).

Llewellyn's 1999 Magickal Almanac explains:

Wicca, as you practice the religion today, is a new religion, barely fifty years old. The techniques you use at present are not entirely what your elders practiced even thirty years ago. Of course, threads of "what was" weave through the tapestry of "what is now."... [I]n no way can we replicate to perfection the precise circumstances of environment, society, culture, religion and magick a hundred years ago, or a thousand. Why would we want to? The idea is to go forward with the knowledge of the past, tempered by the tools of our own age. (Silver Raven Wolf, cited in *Llewellyn's 1999 Magickal Almanac*, Llewellyn Publications, 1998,

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/witchcra.htm>, accessed June 22, 1999).

“Contemporary witchcraft is so diverse and eclectic... that it is extremely difficult to accurately identify and define. In fact, it is almost impossible to state that all witches believe ‘this or that,’” writes Craig Hawkins in the *Christian Research Journal*. (op. cit.).

WICCAN BELIEFS

RADICAL FEMINISM. Danya Ruttenburg wrote in the April 1998 *Sojourner* (a feminist magazine):

[M]any feminists have certainly been attracted to paganism — the theological framework behind energy-channeling called magic or witchcraft. Women who practice paganism often describe it as a potent means of aligning their spiritual practice with their political beliefs.

Though the modern practice has deep roots in a number of ancient traditions, the neo-pagan movement was initiated in England in the 1950s. It took hold in America in two separate, parallel movements — both as part of the non-Western spirituality explosion of the late 1960s, and with the concurrent development of goddess consciousness, in radical separatist feminism (Danya Ruttenburg, “Witchy Woman-Paganism, Politics, and Spiritual Healing,” *Sojourner*, April 1998, p. 25).

Russ Wise, with the Dallas-based Probe Ministries, adds:

In the world of witchcraft the goddess is the giver of life. Witchcraft holds a pantheistic view of God. God is nature. Therefore, God is in all things and all things are a part of God. However, this God is in actuality a goddess and predates the male God. The goddess is the giver of all life and is found in all of creation. This reshaping is nothing less than viewing man and his understanding of reality from a female-centered perspective which focuses on the Divine as being female.... The rise of the goddess is a direct assault on the patriarchal foundation of Christianity. The new feminist spirituality affirms bisexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality, and androgyny (through the expression of transvestitism) (Russ Wise, “The Goddess and the Church,” Probe Ministries, 1997, <http://www/probe.org/docs/goddchu.html>).

“The Goddess religion is a conscious attempt to reshape culture,” says Starhawk, a witch who works with a Catholic priest at the Institute of Creation Spirituality (Quoted by Wise, *ibid.*).

PACIFIST TENDENCIES. A June 1999 edition of *The Washington Post* identifies Wiccans as pacifists. Despite the “many varieties of Wicca,” Wiccans in general accept a basic rule: “An [sic] ye harm none, do what ye will” (Hanna Rosin, “An Army Controversy: Should the Witches Be Welcome?” *The Washington Post*, June 8, 1999).

The Armed Forces Chaplains Board explains that many Wiccans “regard all living things as sacred” and consequently hold that the destruction of human and animal life is wrong. Others believe that “as Nature’s way includes self-defense, they should participate in wars that they conscientiously consider to be just” (The Armed Forces Chaplains Board, “Wiccan Religious Background Paper,” submitted to the Chief Chaplains of the Armed Services in May 1998, <http://www.milpagan.org/files/AFCB-Wicca-paper.htm>).

Nonviolence, however, is the first principle of Wicca, according to a Wicca website:

The harm which is to be regarded as unethical is gratuitous harm; *war, in general, is gratuitous harm* [emphasis added], although it is ethical to defend oneself and one’s liberty when threatened by real and present danger, such as defense against invasion. (“Wiccan Ethics — Basic Principle of the Craft,” <http://home1.gte.net/buckmstr/wiccanethics.htm>, accessed June 22, 1999).

An article titled “Pagans in the Military” by John Machate, published by the Military Pagan Network, elaborates:

In an article by Isaac Bonewits, Archdruid of ADF (Arn Draiocht Fein), he states:

A “soldier,” [sic] on the other hand, I perceive as a hired killer, whose primary task is not the defense of his/her community, although that claim is usually made, but rather the defense of that community’s political, social, religious, and economic rulers.

This statement reflects the attitude of a lot of civilian organizations. One organization doesn’t even want to allow military members to belong to their organization. We as members of the armed forces have to work, not only to convince the military that we are not “baby killers,” [sic] but the civilians pagans too. Again I quote Isaac Bonewits “He [sic] or she will kill any man, woman, or child that he/she is ordered to kill, simply because he/she was told to do so...” (John Machate, “Pagans in the Military,” <http://milpagan.org/articles/pagmilt.htm> accessed June 22, 1999)

(Note: A witch holds pagan beliefs, but not all pagans are witches.) (“The Grove: What is a Pagan? What is a Witch?” <http://www.apocalypse.org/pub/u/hilda/ddtmqa.html>, accessed June 22, 1999.)

ETHICAL RELATIVISM. The Covenant of the Goddess, one of the largest and oldest Wiccan religious organizations in North America, states that evil is subjective: “[W]hat is good for one may be evil for another and vice versa” (“Witchcraft: Commonly-Asked Questions, Straightforward Answers,” Covenant of the Goddess, <http://www.cog.org/wicca/faq.html>, accessed June 22, 1999).

Other examples of this relativistic view abound. Additional Wiccan websites, for instance, make the following claims:

“Wiccans rely on their own judgment [sic] to create their own morals and ideals.... We interact with our gods on a regular basis, and we take their power into ourselves during our rituals. We know and feel our Gods, so we don't believe, we know.” (“Calhoun's Wiccan FAQ,” <http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/3156/wicca.html>, accessed June 22, 1999).

“Witches consider no act immoral unless it is harmful.” (“The Grove — What is a Pagan? What is a Witch?” *op. cit.*).

“Witches have no specific taboos against speaking any particular words, consensual sexual acts among individuals capable of rational consent, or breaking laws they know to be unjust.” (*Ibid.*).

Excerpt from a pagan pledge: “May I always be mindful that I create my own reality and that I have the power within me to create positivity in my life.” (“Circle Sanctuary — A Pledge to Pagan Spirituality,” <http://www.circlesanctuary.org/contact/PSApledge.html>, accessed June 22, 1999).

WICCAN PRACTICES AND MORE

Magic is part of the witches' religion: “astrology, astral projection (out-of-body experiences), incantations, mediumship (channeling), necromancy, raising psychic power, (for many) sex magic, spell casting, and trance states.” (Hawkins, *op. cit.*). Magic, they claim, allows them to “change our lives by spiritual... means.... We back up our actions with magical intent. It is a potent combination.” (“Witchcraft: Commonly-Asked Questions, Straightforward Answers,” *op. cit.*).

According to one witch, witches worship:

the Mother Goddess and also the Horned God.... Worship is often done in pairs, masculine and feminine, and the power, which is produced by magical ritual, is directed by the High Priestess for its desired purpose.... Covens vary in size from approximately 8 to 14 members. The High Priestess heads the coven. The High Priestess who trained her is recognized as a Queen to whom she can turn for

counsel and advice. (Lady Rhiannon, "Gardnerian Wicca," <http://160.149.101.23/chap/relpractice/other/gwicca.htm>, accessed June 24, 1999).

Casting spells is "part of being a Witch," according to the Covenant of the Goddess (COG). However, COG advises that one cast spells on others "only in very limited circumstances" when 'that person's... consent' has not been obtained — acknowledging the power which spells contain." ("Witchcraft: Commonly-Asked Questions, Straightforward Answers," *op. cit.*).

Sex magic, which is practiced by some witches, is the "use of sex (e.g., intercourse — actual or symbolic) within a ritual or spell-casting session to facilitate or augment the efficacy of a given magical rite. That is, sexual activities are used to accomplish the desired goal of the occultist." (Hawkins, *op. cit.*).

The COG website indicates that witches practice necromancy, communication with the dead. Some witches "believe that the dead join the Blessed Ancestors, who watch over, protect and *advise* [emphasis added] their descendants." ("Witchcraft: Commonly-Asked Questions, Straightforward Answers," *op. cit.*).

Wiccan "tools" include swords, cauldrons, wands, boleens (knives used for carving and cutting magical symbols), staffs, and thuribles (incense burners). ("The Witches' League for Public Awareness — The Tools of Witchcraft," <http://www.celticcrow.com/basic/tools.html>, accessed June 22, 1999).

The basic Wiccan dedication ritual states:

I will protect and guard the Old Ways from those who would desire to destroy them. I will defend the God and Goddess. I will work in harmony with the energies of the Earth and the Kingdoms of Plant, Animal, Spirit, and Man, striving always for unity and balance. I will work in harmony with the elements, to understand them. I pledge myself as protector of this Earth and Keeper of the Sacred Mother. I will honor and respect my brothers and sisters in the Craft even when our paths do not join. I will respect and keep the Old Ways and the Wiccan Rede. So mote it be. ("The Witches' League for Public Awareness — Dedication Ritual," <http://www.celticcrow.com/basics/dedicaton.html>, accessed June 22, 1999).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY READINESS

Cohesive units are made of soldiers who subscribe to similar values. For the military, there are clear rights and wrongs, not maybes. Wiccans, on the other hand, are noted for their ethical relativism.

Wiccans subscribe to a radical feminist worldview that supports sexually deviant behavior such as bisexuality and homosexuality, both of which are illegal in the military.

A “Wiccan warrior” is an oxymoron. Wiccans tend to be pacifists, which may be all right for medics but not for infantrymen.

The military has already allowed peyote smoking to accommodate Native Americans, and there are a growing number of cases of Muslim soldiers appealing decisions about headgear, dietary requirements and special holidays. Exceptions for every group will drain limited resources and distract from the military’s primary mission of preparing to fight. The military should embrace corporate rather than individual interest.

Today’s military is overwhelmingly Christian. The Bible labels witchcraft as an abomination. Accommodating witches who engage in behaviors that are antithetical to the “law of nature and nature’s God” will cause unit friction, undermine morale, and impair recruitment and retention.

Unfortunately, the modern military has embraced tolerance for virtually every bizarre practice. It’s past time for Congress to exercise its constitutional obligation to stop the Pentagon’s willingness to sacrifice national defense in order to accommodate political correctness. The armed forces should focus on readiness.

Colonel Maginnis directs Family Research Council’s Military Readiness Project

New Age Influences on the Roman Catholic Church

By Carolina Alexander

There were also false prophets among the people. Even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. Many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. And by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words, whose judgement for a long time has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. (II Peter 2:1-3)

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)

Part I

In the above verses Peter warns the early Christians about heretical doctrines propagated by false messiahs and teachers slowly undermining the faith handed down from the Apostles. Jude, likewise, exhorts his readers to resist the enemy's attacks against the pure Word delivered to the saints. Several other verses allude to the fact that throughout the centuries, false prophets and teachers distort the Word for their own gain.

These verses could very well have been written to our modern-day churches within the last couple of decades. Untold heresies and pagan and/or occult practices have seeped into the teachings and rituals of present-day Christianity. Much to the surprise of many, the Roman Catholic Tradition appears to be the most receptive to this type of inculturation. Here are just a few examples:

For the Cincinnati Sisters of Mercy, the sign of salvation is no longer the Cross of Christ representing the Trinity; it is the "Totem of Salvation" representing earth, wind, water and fire (elements invoked in the practice of Wicca). (parenthesis added). (Michael Rose, The Wanderer, 8/13/98).

Maria Duval, a modern-day psychic on par with Edgar Cayce and Jeane Dixon, was granted an audience by John Paul II. (Maria Duval Letter, 5/1/98).

"Make No Mistake About It: Judas Is In Heaven." So proclaims Monsignor Francis Gaeta of Williston Park, NY. (Church World, Portland, Maine, 3/12/98).

Catholic youth encouraged to participate in Native American/First Nation Christian Experience and Tai-Chi exercises. (Zack Kramer, Oblate World and Voice of Hope, Northern Edition, 2/98).

These are just a few of the blasphemous practice which have crept into the Roman Catholic Tradition. What is more unfortunate is that these types of pagan, New Age beliefs and customs are being encouraged and endorsed by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. For example, at a 1998 Synod of Bishops for Asia held in Rome, "...two Vietnamese bishops asked for greater freedom of inculturation in the specific area of ancestor worship, saying that the Vatican's past bans against the practice have alienated many of the faithful."

In another instance,

...several bishops said the church should be sensitive about how it proclaims Christ as the "unique savior" among the region's majority populations of Buddhists, Hindus and other non-Christians. Some said Catholics can learn much from these other communities: A Thai bishop said Buddhists "are evangelizing us" by their openness and unassuming ways, while an Indian bishop suggested the reading of Hindu texts in the liturgy. (Church World, Portland, Maine, 4/30/98).

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Each of these practices under the guise of TOLERANCE (a favorite catch-all for New Agers) blatantly ignores or deliberately defies Scriptural admonitions against such practices as divination (Deut. 18:9-12), necromancy (I Sam. 28:7ff), universalism (John 14:6), and idolatry (Ex. 20:3-5). A mark of orthodox Christianity is that it remains as pure and unadulterated as when it was first proclaimed in the early Church. Today's many modern varieties, each claiming to be a restored or up-dated version of Christianity, in no way resembles the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles.

In Part II, one of the most popular perpetrators of this New Age virus of tolerance, Matthew Fox, will be examined along with other

pagan practices which are being allowed to tarnish the teachings of Christ. For any orthodox Christian, it is plain to see that the Church is in a very sorry state!

PART II

No one has brought New Age "theology" and the many heresies it has spawned to the attention of the person in the pew more than renegade ex-Roman Catholic Dominican priest, Matthew Fox. This controversial figure, now an ordained Episcopal priest, has abandoned any pretense to Roman Catholic identity and refers to himself as a post-denominational priest. He is best known for his eclectic, syncretistic Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality in San Francisco, California. "...the staff of which includes a witch, a shaman, voodoo priestess, a Zen Buddhist, a T'ai Chi master, and a Jungian analyst..." (Ron Rhodes, Spiritual Counterfeits Journal, 20:3-4).

Before examining Fox's "theology," let's take a look at what kind of an individual is behind the New Age Cosmic Christ and Planetary Healing philosophy espoused by his Institute.

Fox became a Dominican in 1960 after graduating from college, and was ordained in 1967. That same year, as a result of mystic Thomas Merton's influence, Fox entered the doctoral program at the Institut Catholique de Paris. His degree was in the history and theology of spirituality. He focused heavily on medieval mystics. Two of the more important mystics Fox studied were Hildegard of Bingen and Meister Eckhart. These mystics more than any others played a role in molding Fox's thinking on key theological issues, especially the doctrine of Christ. The controversial teachings contained in his 16 books, along with his lack of accountability and submission to the Roman Catholic hierarchy caused such conflict with the Vatican that he was finally dismissed from the Dominican Order in 1993. He then became an Episcopal priest in good standing in December 1994. (Ron Rhodes, SPC JOURNAL, 20:3-4)

Fox's first official act as an Episcopal priest was the celebration of "a high-tech, high decibel 'Rave Mass' in the basement of Grace Cathedral" in San Francisco. Also known as a Planetary Mass, Fox justified his "liturgy" by saying, "Old age theology and stuffiness was out, and New Age experiencing and celebration was in." (n.a., SPC JOURNAL, 19:2/3, Spring 1995, pp. 61-62).

If a curious worshiper should attend such a "Mass," what would he encounter? This cosmic multi-media celebration of earth and the coming Cosmic Christ would greet him with constantly flashing slides, strobe lights, and avant-garde music. Fox described it as prayer with "more dancing and fewer books." "Communion" consists of a "partaking of the life-force that fuels creation; [enabling one] to perceive of himself as part of the divine Body of the universe receiving

the energy of the 'Cosmic Christ.'" (Phil Catalfo, "Glory Be To Gaia," New Age Journal, 2/95, p. 130).

Alluding to the title of his early work, Original Blessing (1983), Fox emphasizes that his liturgy offers a message of hope rather than pessimism (Original Blessing vs. original sin) and teaches that "death is a natural event, a prelude to recycling and rebirth" over and above the Biblical idea of death as the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Feminist theology is also very prevalent in that God is referred to as "Mother" as well as Father. This is not an idea new to Fox as Mary Baker Eddy also envisioned God as "Our Father-Mother God," even beginning her version of the Lord's Prayer in this way. Unfortunately, Fox has received the full blessing of the regional California Episcopal bishop, William Swing, and the Dean of Grace Cathedral, Reverend Alan Jones, for his blasphemous worship service.

As the flamboyancy of Fox's liturgy increases and the worshippers ascend into an ecstatic state, on whom is the New Age worship centered? Fox's disciples do not worship Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity and the Savior of mankind, but rather what he refers to as the "Cosmic Christ."

This christ is "basically a divine presence that permeates all of creation" [note the close connection with pantheism]. The term "cosmic" refers to that which is related to the whole universe. [Fox believes the Cosmic Christ is present in all of creation.]

[Furthermore], the Cosmic Christ is the divine mirror glistening in every creature; it is a pattern that connects. The Cosmic Christ connects heaven and earth, past and future, divinity and humanity, all of creation: everything in heaven and everything on earth. The Cosmic Christ connects all the atoms and galaxies of the universe. It is the image of God present in all things. The Cosmic Christ ushers in an era of coherence, of ending the separations, divisions, dualism, piecemealness that characterizes a world without mysticism. (Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ. San Francisco CA: Harper and Row, 1988, quoted by Ron Rhodes, SPC Journal, 20:3-4, pp. 51-52).

Briefly, in conclusion, we should note that the God of the Bible is not a part of what He created. He is and always will be eternally distinct from all of creation. Furthermore, the One, true Living God chose only to manifest Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ, not in the many religious leaders before or after Him. While on earth, Jesus reiterated the SHEMA of the Old Testament (Deut. 6:4). He also did not refuse the worship accorded to Him by the people (Mt. 4:10 with Mt. 28:9). However, He did condemn idol worship and polytheism. Finally, Jesus did not consider Himself one of the many vehicles for the Cosmic Christ. In fact, He claimed that what He said took prece-

dence over all others. He said that He is humanity's only means of coming into a relationship with God (John 14:6).

In the third and final part of this article, other pagan and blasphemous practices that are finding acceptance in the Roman Catholic Tradition, as well as some of the mainline Protestant churches, will be examined. Also, suggestion on how to refute the New Age heresies infiltrating Christendom will be offered.

PART III

"If the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6).

The above verse is a strong warning to the shepherds of the Lord's flock. It warns that they will be held accountable for those who perish due to the negligence of the appointed shepherds. Yet, many pastors have closed their eyes to the shameful heathen practices infiltrating their congregations. Furthermore, not only have they ignored these sacrilegious intrusions, they have encouraged them!

One of the most blatant of these profane practices is the "new and improved" Lord's Prayer condoned by the pastor of Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Red Deer, Alberta, Canada. The priest introduced the revised prayer with the backing of the parish liturgy committee. The new prayer, which was protested by most of Sacred Heart's parishioners, reads as follows:

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Painbearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be. Father and Mother of us all. Loving God, in whom is heaven, the Hallowing of your name echo through the universe! The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your common wealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth with the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen. (Western Report, 5/18/92, as reported in The Christian World Report, June/July 1992).

Other scandalous "acts of worship" were introduced into an Arlington, Florida liturgy, not only with the approval of the bishop, but also with his participation. Bishop John Snyder "donned a yellow and red-orange robe with a dragon on the front for a special Mass celebrating the Vietnamese lunar new year, Tet" (The Wanderer, 2/25/99).

Other examples of this ecclesiastical virus include a New Hampshire church printing a prayer invoking "Lady Wisdom" for the parishioners' summertime devotions; a Roman Catholic college in Vermont offering a 3-week retreat conducted by a Buddhist monk (no Christian follow-up was offered); a Roman Catholic nun vowed to the nun's precepts in the Theravadan Buddhist tradition being invited to conduct a retreat at a Roman Catholic retreat house in Maine; and two respected Roman Catholic publishing houses which have recently published two books smacking of idolatry and necromancy. One book encourages "traditional Christians to be more open to New Age ideas and to give them tools to refute some of the less Christian ones" (Reverend Melia Helson, Sparrow Hawk Villager, 1/2/98). The second book is authored by a five-time winner of the Roman Catholic Press Association Journalism Awards and offers "75 comforting true stories from Americans who have claimed to experience the actual presence of a loved one after death" (Mitch Finley, Whispers of Love. New York: Crossroads Press, 1995). Unfortunately, many more examples abound.

It is not only the Roman Catholic Tradition that has been infected by this spiritual "pornography." Several mainline Protestant churches have turned to what is known as "reimagining." The original conference held in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1994 was a mixture of paganism and radical feminist thought integrated with Christian symbolism. "Participants shared milk and honey in a communion-like ritual affirming the sensuality of women." They spoke of savoring "the life-giving juices of our bodies and planet." Participants prayed to "Sophia," who was identified as the Goddess of Wisdom — a portrayal of God for which the conference organizers claimed Old Testament roots. (n.a. The Watchman Expositor. Arlington, Texas. Vol. 15, #4, 1998, p. 3).

What churches endorse such insults to the Almighty? The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, and the United Methodist Church among other mainline denominations.

The Church of England has been sullied as well. Liberal Anglican prelates are planning an inauguration ceremony at which Prince Charles will be coronated after his mother steps down. "The interfaith ecumenical service in which Charles will proclaim himself 'defender of faith' rather than the traditional 'defender of the faith' will include Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others — probably tree worshippers" (n.a. The Wanderer. 2/25/9).

The last and most inane example of all comes out of Tucson, Arizona where the presiding priest at a wedding permitted the groom's 6-year old cat to be the best man. When asked to comment, the celebrant replied: "I really don't mind them in the ceremony; it's

a way of incorporating all of God's creatures in our liturgies." (n.a. The Wanderer. 8/13/98). [ed. note: Did the cat sign the license as a witness?]

Is there any hope for those trying to remain faithful to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"? It is a battle that orthodox Christians are fighting with fewer and fewer cohorts. However, there are some Christian guidelines which can help us to present the Gospel in a clear manner to those enraptured by the vain philosophies espoused by wolves in sheep's clothing.

1. Present God as a person. He is not an essence, a force, or a mere cosmic energy (Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8). These verses show that He exists and that He loves — attributes of a person.
2. Present God as Creator. The New Ager holds a spiritualized concept of evolution, in which only "consciousness," not matter, is of any consequence (Acts 17:24; Genesis 1:26-27, 31; Col. 1:17).
3. Present truth as an objective reality. God reveals Himself through His creation (Gen. 1:1; Roms. 1:20); the written Word (Roms. 10:17; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12); and Jesus Christ, His Son (Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1-2).
4. Present salvation as an act of God who intervened in space and time to redeem us. Every human creature is in need of salvation and it is offered only through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:9-18; 2 Tim. 3:2-5; 1 John 1:5-6, 10; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23; 1:21-23. 18-19; 3:20; 1 Tim. 1:8-10). (Based on material from: Charles G. Ward, ed. The Billy Graham Christian Worker's Handbook. Minneapolis, MN: Worldwide Publications, 1996).

Suggested Reading: Randy England. The Unicorn in the Sanctuary (The impact of the New Age on the Roman Catholic Church). Manassas, VA: Trinity Communications, 1990).

New Developments in Preaching Narrative: The Desirable and The Dangerous

By David L. Larsen

"Neither give heed to fables..." — 1 Timothy 1:4

"But refuse profane and old wives' fables..." — 1 Timothy 4:7

"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth and be turned unto fables." — 2 Timothy 4:4

"Not giving heed to Jewish fables..." Titus 1:14

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables..." — 2 Peter 1:16

God's watchmen on the wall need to be vigilant for the wolves and thieves who come from without (both openly and stealthily) but also for the hirelings or false friends who "creep in unawares" (Jude 3-4). A mighty Trojan horse is already within the gates and many do not seem alert to the dangers in which we are already deeply enmeshed.

The seismic activity in the field of homiletics (the art, science and craft of preaching) in the last decades has been the remarkable renaissance of interest in preaching Biblical narratives. Narratives is one of many kinds of Biblical literature and would include historical narratives, parables, and the like. Bible-believing Christians have always loved the stories of the Bible. We have Bible story books for children. Our Sunday School lessons have set forth the wonders of the Biblical stories. Our preachers (like F. B. Meyer, Alexander Whyte and Clarence E. Macartney) have preached on Bible characters with great effect. Bible preachers have always used (and sometimes overused) illustrative stories, understanding well that illustrations are like instant-replay. They can illuminate Biblical truth (but not establish doctrine or principle by themselves). They intensify feeling and emotion. They personalize and enliven discourse. We have always loved the treasures of Biblical narrative (narrative being defined as a description of people and events in which there is some kind of complication or "hitch" toward which some resolution is attempted). No book has stories in it like the Bible and these stories (apart from what is clearly parable) are true stories that actually happened. This has been important for us. About all that most narratologists will assert is that stories are "history-like." Not enough. In more recent years, main-line preachers and the homileticians of the

"left" have found the cupboard bare for their preaching. Having conceded the Bible to destructive higher criticism, they face preaching from a book riddled with all kinds of mistakes as a consequence of their "scissors and paste" approach. So they have been giving book reviews, talking about current events, encouraging "dialogue" of all kinds and preaching highly psychological sermons on life's situation (and sadly some in our camp have followed them in the latter).

Some years ago, in a complex series of events which I have traced elsewhere (David L. Larsen, Telling the Old, Old Story: The Art of Narrative Preaching. Wheaton: Crossway, 1995. In chapter one I trace the development of the trend), H. Richard Niebuhr of Yale advocated telling Biblical and other stories to interest hearers and ostensibly to change lives. Torrents of volumes have been published and narrative preaching has become the methodology of the preaching of the left. After all, who ever really asks whether Jack and the bean stalk or the three bears ever actually lived or where they lived? A highly developed science of narratology has evolved and from it has been built what is called narrative theology, narrative ethics and even narrative spirituality. These efforts range from very radical to a more cautious use of Biblical material; it is actually alleged that because human life is a narrative, story in itself can change life. Of course there is little application of the story because telling people what a story means would be condescending and patronizing. Fred Craddock, one of the most gifted practitioners of the new methodology, says that application is really totally subjective because we are effectively "without authority." (Fred Craddock. As One Without Authority. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971. This book was ably challenged by Craddock's predecessor at Chandler, Cf. John R. Brokhoff, As One With Authority! The Ministry of Preaching Wilmore: Bristol Books, 1989. Choice!).

The new obsession with narrative fits right into our contemporary disdain for doctrine, because doctrine is not derived from narrative but from divinely given interpretation of the story or parable (as in Matthew 13:18ff; etc.) or from a more didactic or epistolary passage such as from the teachings of our Lord or the writings of the Apostles. For many who go full bore into narrative, the narrative parts of the Bible become the new canon. David Buttrick, one of the high priests, admits that he never preaches from the wisdom literature or apocalyptic (Daniel and Revelation) (David Buttrick. Homiletics: Moves and Structures. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. This represents the "new homiletics" matching the "new hermeneutics." Pernicious.). We, however, are called to preach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

Of course a frothy little story-telling without point or application (unless something very moralistic like Aesop's Fables) fits right into "sermonettes for Christianettes." Sadly the story so often becomes

simply "my story." In post-modernism's loss of any "meganarrative" (or the sense of God's great plan of redemption in Christ), why not settle for an amusing or entertaining little story. The thin, very brief little story also is consistent with the trend of "dumbing down" the worship service and losing any sense of need for a teaching sermon at all.

There is considerable evidence that these developments are having considerable impact upon conservative pulpits in our times. But we who have been persuaded that our duty is to preach the whole Bible should probably not break our arms in self-congratulatory back slapping. How can we be satisfied to do so poorly what the Bible does so well? It is ironic that we look like the rationalist of our times as we plunk down our very left-brained cookie cutter outlines on the powerful story lines of Biblical narrative. In a more left-brained (or feeling) age in which television is more the paradigm for communication than the printed page, why should we not take advantage of the powerful imagery of the Bible narratives to capture the attention and score the glorious truths of our great God? (Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business. New York: Penguin, 1985. A timely study of what is happening.). Jesus used stories to great effects as did the Apostle Paul, along with arresting and incisive metaphor.

We sense that there is widespread confusion and hesitation in many pulpits rather than the confident, Spirit-led exposition of the entire Bible. Let us be motivated and recharged to seek excellence and clarity in handling all parts of the Bible. Some new and fresh approaches to greater effectiveness in handling the trove of narrative material in Scripture might well become a burden of prayer for Sunday School teachers and preachers who have the opportunity to share "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). But let us seek to be discerning and faithful in these days of widespread deviation and spiritual declension.

Wolves Among The Sheep

By Thomas D. Sheehy

What would you say if the Mormon Tabernacle choir were to sing at your church? Would you confront the Pastor? Would you say anything if they appeared at your local Christian bookstore, concert or radio station? What would you do?

While most evangelicals would send the Mormons packing, there's another cult which, according to the June 1997 issue of Charisma magazine, is twice the size of the Mormon Church. Its ministers have quietly worked their way onto radio stations and evangelized Christians in the belief that we are one, while denying the Trinity and salvation by grace alone. Even such men as James Dobson have been deceived.

The cult is called Oneness Pentecostalism, also known as the "Jesus Only" movement. Among their ministers who portray themselves as Christians are Steve and Annie Chapman, and a lesser known group called The Katinas. The name of the church of this latter group is Christ Church, in Brentwood, Tennessee, a suburb of Nashville. Other artists who have used the choir of this cultic group for background vocals include Michael W. Smith, Glen Campbell, and Steven Curtis Chapman. Carman, incidentally, has also used a Jesus Only church in recording his song "The Absolute Best." The name of the church was the West Angeles Church of God in Christ. Even country artists are using this cultic choir in their music.

But what's really concerning is the cunning way in which Christ Church hides the fact that they are a "Jesus Only" church. Even their booklet states they are not a "Jesus Only" church. What many who read their statement don't know is Oneness Pentecostals dislike being called "Jesus Only." The first time I called a Oneness church a "Jesus Only" church, I was quickly chastised. In their minds, it's as derisive a term as some of the racial epitaphs uttered by some.

Before I call an entire church a cult, I want to be absolutely sure. So I called the church and asked them for a doctrinal statement. I was sent a booklet titled What Christ Church Believes. I called and asked for another statement. Something more definitive. They sent me another booklet, much like the first. This seemed to go on for years.

As I called in search of more definitive terms as to what they believed, I played telephone tag with their pastors. All I got was answering machines and no responses (except maybe another booklet).

Finally, I'd had enough, and insisted I speak with someone personally. I spoke with Don Wood, Director of Pastoral Ministries. By this time, other booklets had come identifying Christ Church as a Oneness Church, such as Calvin Beisner's book titled "Jesus Only Churches." To Don Wood I said: "Yes sir, it says in your booklet that you believe in One God revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Could you be a little more specific. After all, this statement could be embraced by Mormons, Trinitarians or Oneness Pentecostals." Wood evaded my questions, until I asked "But aren't you Oneness in your theology?" (I avoided the term "Jesus Only.") "Yes, we are," he answered. "You don't accept the Trinity?" "That's correct," he said. I asked for a letter stating they are a Oneness church. His answer left no room for doubt. He answered me by using the most common question a cultist uses when pressed for an answer. "What's your motive?" My suspicions were confirmed.

Perhaps even more frustrating to me is that any attempt to bring this to the attention of pastors, chaplains, bookstores, colleges, radio station executives is met with resistance. Even offering them printed evidence from Christ Church or offering to pay for telephone calls there elicits little reaction.

I suppose I might appear to be a trouble maker or a "loose cannon." Some might think I'm out to destroy careers. The fact that they are so well known, and I'm not makes my claims sound even more ridiculous to some.

One pastor I tried warning about the Chapmans believed that the statement that they believe in One God revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sounded orthodox. It simply is not Biblical.

The key words here is the belief that God was "revealed." Although some Trinitarians might take this to mean we believe in the same God, it actually refers to the "revelation" that Jesus is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's based upon the supposed revelation by John Schaepe, and is an esoteric, extra Biblical experience, or as Oneness Pentecostals refer to it: "The Revelation."

Any attempts to receive doctrinal statements from the musical artists themselves are also met with silence.

When I called the Assemblies of God District Council in Nashville, Tennessee, I asked if they knew if Christ Church was a Oneness church. The director stated that they didn't concern themselves with such matters, and suggested I contact the church itself. When I tried to explain the difficulty in this, and their reluctance to provide me with more definitive doctrinal statements, he stated that he couldn't help. He did point out that they had an excellent musical program. So does the Mormon Church.

I couldn't believe it. This was a group that had nearly destroyed the Assemblies of God at one time.

The founder of a music festival here in the Midwest was also deceived, and when I attempted to point out that the Chapmans are Oneness Pentecostals, he stated that all the musical groups are required to sign a statement similar to the Apostles' Creed. I asked him if he knew that cultists often give different meanings to evangelical words, and thus change meanings? Walter Martin referred to this as "scaling the language barrier." I faxed documented evidence. Again, nothing happened.

I wonder, do we really consider others, though professing Christians, equal to us, even when they become superstars in the music industry? If someone has legitimate proof that another, well-known group might be counterfeit, do we listen to those raising questions, or do we raise them to the level of idols? Are we really as separated from the world as we think?

BOOK REVIEW

The God of the Bible and Other Gods

By Robert P. Lightner

Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson

When you listen to the polls in which questions about God are asked, you find great disparity in the responses. This disparity is seen even among Christians.

Dr. Lightner, whose credentials and writings are highly respected, believes there is a definite need for a helpful study and knowledge of the God of the Bible. The author's thesis is that the only true God is the God of the Scriptures.

First, Dr. Lightner establishes the primacy of the Bible as the revelation of God. This Bible, the Word, is inspired, authoritative and is preserved in "canon" for illumination by the Holy Spirit. Jesus repeatedly affirmed the Scriptures as being divinely inspired. The author claims, on the basis of the Bible, there is sufficient evidence for the knowledge of God.

The Bible is not without its critics, however. Satan, the chief critic, was the first creature to question the right of the God of the Bible to rule. This God has also been dethroned by many liberal theologians.

The author emphasizes the fact the God is the revealer of Himself. (God is not mute — He has spoken.) He had revealed Himself in general revelation, which is His creative activity in nature, and in special revelation, His self-disclosure in the written Word and the Living Word, Christ. The Scriptures are replete with these assertions.

The supreme revelation of God to humanity is the Person of Jesus Christ. The author states that the "living Word and written Word are two impregnable forces, the pillars upon which Christianity stands or falls... these two are inseparable from one another and from Biblical Christianity" (p. 78). Perfect harmony prevails between these two sources of revelation. Their purpose is to reveal God as authoritative and knowable.

Another important element that gives recognition to God is the description of His personhood. That God possesses personality is clearly manifested by the living Word and in the written Word. He is not a force, or an "it," or even the "ground of being."

Further evidence that the author presents from the Holy Scriptures for the presence of God is the doctrine of the Trinity. While this doctrine is fraught with mystery, the written Word clearly teaches the divine prerogatives exercised by the three persons of the Godhead — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The author discusses the matter of divine sovereignty as an important characteristic of the God of the Bible. This sovereignty means that He is absolute and sole ruler of the universe. Nothing takes place that is outside or beyond His jurisdiction.

According to the author the God of the Bible is described by specific characteristics which affect the lives of believers and non-believers. He cautions not to have imaginary concepts about God but embraces only those that are expressed in the Bible.

The author reserves a special chapter on a preeminent work of God, i.e., salvation. The work of salvation spans the time from regeneration to glorification. The author emphasizes that this is the work of the triune God. The Father plans our salvation; the Son provides our salvation; and the Holy Spirit protects it (p. 155).

The author utilizes his final chapter to compare the God of the Bible with other "gods" whom people groups acknowledge as their higher power. He has provided a series of charts comparing Christianity with some major cults. His appendix includes a synopsis of many cults and religions.

The book is viewed as an excellent text for a comprehensive study on the doctrine of God. Therefore, its availability to church groups or individuals for study is highly recommended.

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