

The Discerner

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we the spirit spirit of error

Volume 20, Number 3

July • August • September 2000

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

We welcome the opportunity to send you another issue of The Discerner. In each issue we attempt to present articles and book reviews of current interest.

We recognize that some of our articles are of a controversial nature, even among Bible-believing Christians, let alone for members of cults and aberrations of Christianity. Such a controversial subject is presented in our first article on Bible translations. The purpose of the article is not to irritate or offend anyone, but to have all of us think clearly on the subject.

Recently we found we were the cause of offense to some individuals. A local newspaper did an article presenting the ministry of Religion Analysis Service. We had a visit to our office from a Jehovah's Witness. We had the opportunity to open the Scripture with him and present the Gospel from 1 Corinthians 15 and other passages. After some discussion, he left and has not returned, though we invited him to do so. Speaking of Jehovah's Witnesses, recently their publication, The Watchtower, carried the news that a Jehovah's Witness would no longer be "shunned," i.e., excommunicated, disfellowshipped for receiving a blood transfusion. This is a major change in Jehovah's Witnesses' position. When will adherents to this cult realize their doctrines, beliefs do not come from God but from a group of older men located in Brooklyn, NY?

The newspaper also had several letters to the editor from Seventh-day Adventists, but none has come to our office. At least some people in this area know we exist. In fact, several Christians

contacted us after becoming aware of RAS for the first time, even though we advertise in the one local Christian newspaper.

The second article in this issue deals with another current controversial subject among Christians, the topic called the "Openness of God." The article is by a long-time friend and Board of Reference member, Dr. Roy E. Knuteson. The "Openness of God" appears to be a combination of several old heresies by what otherwise might be considered evangelicals. In this rests one of the basic dangers of the concept – it is being put forth by individuals who in the past have been recognized as biblical in their theology.

It seems to me the "Openness of God" is an attempt to in some way humanize God and deify man. The idea that in some way mankind can operate free of God, sometimes expressed as man's "free will" is not supported by Scripture or history. Man has a will, but it is not "free" of ultimate accountability to God. This is coupled with the idea that since man is "free," God does not know what we will do in the future, so the future is unknown to Him. With such a viewpoint one might even speculate the Antichrist and False Prophet might eventually be saved souls. If you are not familiar with this theology, I believe you will find Dr. Knuteson's article enlightening.

A friend of RAS living in St. Louis sent us a copy of a short 19th century article by a friend of Charles Haddon Spurgeon. It seems so relevant to what is happening today, that we decided to share it with our readers. It and the preceding article reminds us of Solomon's words: "There is nothing new under the sun."

We are including an update on developments in the International Churches of Christ, a.k.a. the Boston Church of Christ. This movement is still causing major spiritual problems especially for college-age young people, but at the same time it is receiving criticism from knowledgeable people outside the group.

Our concluding article is from a writer new to the pages of The Discerner, Daryl Griffin. His presentation takes the style as if questions are being directed to the Virgin Mary. The answers come from the pages of Scripture with references to corruptions of the truth developed in history by Roman Catholic writers.

The book reviews at the end of this issue call attention to two new books. Berit Kjos, and John Ankerberg and John Weldon are well-known Christian writers.

We want to share with our readers that we have received a generous gift from Gen Anderson in memory of her husband, Harold Anderson. Mr Anderson was the Treasurer of our Board at the time the Lord, unexpectedly for us, called him home. His homegoing reminds us of Psa. 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints." Our temporary lose is heaven's gain.

We welcome back to The Discerner with this issue a number of returning subscribers. This is in response to reminders that we sent (about 150) that subscriptions had expired. Please look at your mailing label. If it reads "XX-3" your subscription expires with this issue. Remember, a renewal costs only \$4.00 per year in the U.S.

Bible Translations

By William A. BeVier

One of the most controversial subjects among otherwise Bible-believing Christians today is which translation of the Bible we should be using. To even start to discuss the issue is like walking blindfolded through a minefield. Someone is certain to be offended or fellowship will be ended regardless which view a person holds.

At Religion Analysis Service we are contacted by individuals who want to know why we don't take a clear, precise, published view on the issue. Those who carefully examine our catalog discover that we have books expressing several viewpoints. Some believe this is wrong.

Several of the cults have their own translations or preferences for a particular translation and if you don't have a strong position on one translation you can be accused that in some way you are cultic.

There are some who apparently desire to simplify the matter (as if translating from one language to another is simple). They insist their translation is the only accurate one and not to accept that one is to be heretical or worse. The strongest expression of this view comes from those labeled as "King James Only," though it is not limited to them.

It should be recognized there is a lot of money being made today by publishing Bible translations. Publishers, even those carrying several translations, claim that theirs is the "best." The Bible still is the best selling book in the English language (may it always be so). Lists of "best sellers" never list the Bible, because it would always be number one.

Some years ago I was in contact with a representative of Oxford Press (hardly an evangelical Christian publishing house today). Oxford Press publishes the Scofield Reference Bible. I asked why? The man replied nicely that I obviously was not very knowledgeable about the publishing field. He pointed out that most every publisher carries a Bible on their trade list. Reason: The Bible is a best seller. He told me that for years the Scofield Reference Bible had been the leading seller of the Oxford publications. All publishers are aware of this. They also know Americans' propensity for something new. This is whether it is a new model car, a new movie, or a new Bible translation. Even publishers of the King James Version will add something new to their publication, e.g., study aids, maps, anything to keep a copyright on it.

We must not think everyone who publishes the Scriptures is doing so because of a desire to get God's written Word into the hands of as many people as possible. This does not include individuals and groups

who distribute the Bible, such as the Gideons, at no or little cost to the receiver.

Having studied both Koine Greek (language in which the New Testament was written) and Classical Hebrew (language of most of the Old Testament) and having read many of the books dealing with the issues, both pro and con, I have had to come to some conclusions on the subject, as have other members of the R.A.S. Board.

I personally use the King James Version (KJV) in my preaching and teaching after over fifty years in the ministry which includes thirty-seven years of teaching the Bible and related subjects on the undergraduate and graduate levels. However, I recognize the KJV is not a perfect translation. Further, I use the 1769 recension of the KJV, not the original 1611 edition. Most people have never seen a 1611 edition. Recently a strong supporter of the KJV Only position published a book intended to help readers understand the archaic words in the KJV (1769 recension).

Misspelled words still occur in printed copies of the KJV. I have in my possession two copies of the KJV printed by Oxford Press in 1977 and 1987. Both copies have the same three typographical errors after over 300 years of printing. These are modern printing errors, not copying errors and not the insertions of copying scribes.

Reading the KJV, I recognize some of the translation problems. A few examples to indicate what I mean. One is the word "ghost" especially when applied to the Holy Spirit (Greek word is "spirit," not "ghost"). Use of the word "devils" when referring to demons. There is only one Devil, though many demons. References to "unicorn" and "dragon" in the KJV reflect the beliefs of the 17th century translators, not the word in the Hebrew text. Use of the word "fasting" where it does not appear in many N.T. Greek manuscripts reflects the theology of the translators, not what the Bible originally stated.

I see the words "candles" and "candle stick" in the KJV. These existed in 17th century England, but not in Bible times. The words should be "lamps" (olive oil) and "lampstand."

Some extol the linguistic abilities and scholarship of the KJV translators. True, they were among the best educated, devout men of their day in England. However, they were deficient in at least one area in their knowledge of Hebrew. They repeatedly used the word "cherubims." The English letters "im" indicate a Hebrew plural, as in Elohim. To add an English "s" to a Hebrew "im" is redundant. The word in English should be either cherubim or cherubs, not cherubims. God knows the difference, the Holy Spirit knows the difference, and so do today's Hebrew scholars. Evidently the KJV translators did not.

In the New Testament the KJV has "Easter" in Acts 12:4 for the Greek "Passover" (regardless of which Greek manuscript is used). We note confusion between Joshua and Jesus in Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8. The KJV has Paul using the words "God forbid" several times. The Holy Spirit would never make such mistakes and neither would Paul.

The KJV frequently has the word "hell" where the Hebrew and Greek texts (whatever ms) has sheol, hades, gehenna, and tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4). The use of "bottles" for wine skins is another anachronism. The Old English word "corn" for the Hebrew and Greek "grain" is misleading for modern readers, as is "meat," as in "meat offering," for meal offering. It appears obvious the KJV translators were not "inspired."

King James Only advocates frequently refer to the "Textus Receptus" (TR, Text Received) and the work of the Roman Catholic monk Erasmus (ca. 1466-1536) as the only correct Greek text of the New Testament. But Erasmus as he compiled his Greek text revised it four times (and the KJV translators did not use his last edition). Which is the correct, inspired text?

Erasmus had only four Greek manuscripts to use, and apparently three were copies of the same earlier Greek text. All were "Western" manuscripts dating from the 10-12th centuries (over 1,000 years after the New Testament was written). At the same time the Greek Orthodox Church in the East was using a much older text. Also, none of Erasmus' manuscripts had the last verses of the book of Revelation, so he translated these verses from the Latin Vulgate and added them to his text. Age of a text isn't everything, but it is a factor to be considered when arriving at the original.

Erasmus was a "textual critic" by current standards. He compared the manuscripts he had with their differing readings then decided for himself what the correct New Testament text should be. And remember, he had no committee or associates of competent scholarship to evaluate his work.

I realize translating from one language to another is not easy. Some years ago I received a letter written in Spanish from a pastor in Venezuela. I do not read Spanish. Though I could get the drift of what he wrote, I wanted an English translation. I gave the letter to three different people requesting a translation. One was my brother who lived 11 years in Venezuela and was later given several positions in business because of his knowledge of Spanish. One was a college Spanish teacher. The third was a missionary's daughter born and raised in Latin America. All agreed on the substance (the pastor wanted money - I had figured that out). All were dealing with a current modern language. All three had the "autograph" (the original let-

ter). All three were versed in Spanish. But their translations differed widely in the wording.

I cannot accept the accusations that “heretics” or New Agers translated the New American Standard (NAS) or the New International Versions (NIV) as some do, e.g., Gail Riplinger, New Age Versions. I know too many of these men personally to believe that.

The KJV, the NAS, and NIV, as well as the Revised Standard Version (RSV) all were done from several sources, and none from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. All are translations done by fallible humans.

As I stated, I use the KJV in preaching and teaching though being aware of some of its deficiencies. I’m also aware of deficiencies in the NAS and NIV. I have personally spoken to Paul Enns and Ken Barker, current co-editors of the two versions about some of these apparent problems, e.g., translations of the Greek words “porneia” and “mocheia” (KJV “fornication” and “adultery”) and the errors and inconsistencies in the NAS and NIV. The basic issue is divorce and remarriage.

Much more might be written on this subject (many books have been), but not in a periodical article. In conclusion, to return to the original question, the Board of R.A.S. considered the question of English Bible translations some time ago. It was decided as yet there is no “perfect” translation. We still are waiting for one. Even the Lord when He was here on earth (as did the Apostles) sometimes quoted from the Hebrew text of the day, sometimes from the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the O.T.), and on occasion from a text no modern scholar has been able to identify. The addition of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been a help compared to the Masoretic text (10th century AD), but we still don’t have the original.

The truth is, no one as yet has the original text, and a person can come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the help of the Holy Spirit, by reading any of the principle English translations, e.g., KJV, NAS, NIV.

R.A.S. does make available to our constituency books with differing views. We have to trust our readers to have some discernment in these areas. Some issues are very clear based on the Bible, Bible translations, for many otherwise Bible-believing people, is not one of them.

Does God Know The Future?

By Roy E. Knuteson, Ph.D.

There is a new controversy swirling among some evangelicals today and especially in the Baptist General Conferences of churches regarding the omniscience of Almighty God. This is an old, but now resurrected theory called "Openness Theology." It argues that God cannot know the future actions of His free creatures until they occur because up to that point they do not exist! In other words, the future is not definite and fixed as biblical theologians have taught for generations, but rather the future exists only as possibilities as determined solely by the free will of man.

The foremost proponent of this teaching is Dr. Gregory Boyd, a theology professor at Bethel College in Arden Hills, Minnesota and a prominent BGC pastor of the large Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul. He is the author of several books, his most recent being The Openness of God, published by Baker Book House of Grand Rapids, Michigan. When Baker decided to publish this controversial volume, several top executives resigned their positions in protest saying that this teaching did not represent the theological position of the publishing company. Indeed, it does not.

For the past two years the Baptist General Conference has been embroiled in the controversy and at their recent annual convention in Florida, the denominational representatives affirmed their historic belief in God's omniscience and sovereignty. But in a subsequent vote they allowed the chief proponent of "Open Theology" to continue teaching this heresy at Bethel College. The denominational leaders and college administration have advocated the retention of Dr. Boyd while at the same time stating that they would not hire any faculty members who hold to an openness view of theology! One wonders if this position would be taken if the person in question was not such a prominent and popular pastor in the Twin Cities.

THE THEOLOGY OF OPENNESS

Briefly stated, this open view of God's understanding of the future is based on some Old Testament Scriptures which portray God as "changing his mind" in the light of changing circumstances as in Exodus 32:14 and 2 Kings 20:1-7. It is also based on a literal interpretation of passages like Genesis 6:5-6 and Ezekiel 22:1-7 where God

expressed "regret and disappointment" over the decisions and actions of His creatures. Dr. Boyd also cites Jeremiah 3:6, 7, 19-29 to suggest that God was "surprised" how things turned out because He expected a different outcome. Jeremiah 7:31 is cited to show that God did not know that His people would behave as they did in turning against Him. Dr. Boyd also observes that the Lord often speaks to Israel in terms of what may or may not happen as in Exodus 3:18-4:9. He writes that : "...things may not turn out as God desires."

ANSWERING THESE ARGUMENTS

Traditionally, Biblical theologians have interpreted these and other similar passages as "anthropomorphisms," meaning that they are figurative expressions depicting God's actions in human terms for our understanding. This, we believe, is true in some contexts. However, in many scriptures cited by the Openness theologians, God is simply stating His options, of what will be the consequences if they persist in their evil ways and what He will do if they repent and return to Him.

REFUTED BY THE SCRIPTURES

To declare that God's knowledge is partially closed and partially open (depending upon people's decisions) is contrary to several major doctrines and numerous passages of Scripture. First, and foremost, are the declarative

"...for I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning..."

Isaiah 46:9

Scriptures, such as Malachi 3:6 where God makes a self-testimony to Israel saying: "I the Lord do not change." People may say that God changes, but the Bible declares He is immutable in His person and ways.

Isaiah 46:9-10 says: "Remember the former things long past, for I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying: 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure.'"

The Psalmist said:

O Lord, you have searched me and know me,

You know when I sit and when I rise,
You perceive my thoughts from afar,
You discern my goings out and my lying down.
You are familiar with all my ways,
Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely O Lord.
Psalm 139:1-4

If God be God, He must be sovereign and omniscient. He knows all, including the past and the future and every event of history. Everything is definite and known by God because He has ordained it from all eternity. God's perfect knowledge extends to all things including the future decisions of His free creatures, whether angels or people.

Dr. Boyd tries to avoid this obvious conclusion by stating that the problem, as he sees it, is our misunderstanding of creation, not God's omniscience. In other words, by creative design God made us free agents who can make decisions that are unknown to the Lord until they are actually made in time. In his book Letters From a Skeptic he states: "God can't foreknow the good and bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates those people and they in turn, create their decisions" (p. 30). Therefore, by this creative process God has deliberately limited His foreknowledge and consequently does not know anything until it actually exists! Some of the future, Dr. Boyd grants, is "definite," but not all and that "part of reality that God perfectly knows consists of possibilities." This is Arminianism taken to an extreme. It is a denial of God's omniscience in all matters.

Secondly, the open view is a denial of God's omnipresence, the Biblical conclusion that God is everywhere in time as well as space. He is always in the "eternal present," meaning that the future is as settled in the mind of God as the past. There are no surprises to our Lord regarding the decisions and conduct of anyone. In the Psalm quoted above, the writer of holy Scripture refutes the notion that God is limited in His knowledge because He is limited in His personal presence. He asks: "Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; If I make my bed in the depths, you are there" (verses 7-8). Certainly no one can escape the omnipresence of the Lord, either now or in the future. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight" (Hebrews 4:13). No wonder the Psalmist exclaims: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me" (Psalm 139:6).

Thirdly, Openness Theology undermines our confidence in God's ability to accomplish His purposes here below. It is a strike against His sovereignty. Dr. Boyd, following Arminian theology, believes that God can guarantee anything He wants about the future, but He has left some things, such as our eternal destiny in our hands. He writes:

"I hold that God limits the exercise of His own power by giving free will to creatures (humans and angels)." This is a denial of the doctrine of predestination, or the scriptural teaching that God has predetermined those who will enjoy eternity with Him and therefore has recorded their names in the Book of Life "before the creation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). From our vantage point, it is all determined beforehand by a sovereign God. Acts 13:48 flatly declares: "...all who were appointed to eternal life, believed." God's foreknowledge includes more than our actions, it also includes our very persons. It is "*whom* He foreknew" not "*what* He foreknew" (Rom. 8:29).

Fourthly, this view of God cannot account for the prophetic portions of Scripture. Yet the Bible is full of prophecies about people, their actions and destinies, all announced and determined beforehand. The book of Revelation, for example, is generally disregarded by those who hold to this unpredictable view of things to come. But this grand book of the future describes in detail the movements of armies, the actions of the Antichrist, and the final overthrow of the coming world church, plus the actions of believers and unbelievers alike in the coming Great Tribulation. Prophecy is, as the Bible reveals, determined and reliable in all that it predicts. To state that God does predict the future "whenever it suits His sovereign purposes," but at other times He remains ignorant of what will happen is certainly a denial of the foreknowledge of God and His prophetic utterances found in holy Scripture.

Fifthly, Openness Theology, I believe, is incoherent and inconsistent. How can God guarantee some aspects of the future without controlling everything about the future? To hold to the idea that some things are eternally fixed, while allowing mere human beings the ability to change things is contrary to all logic and scriptural reasoning. Dr. Boyd claims that "everything in life, from our own personal experience down to quantum particles, points to the truth that predictable stability does not rule out an element of unpredictability." It doesn't? Scriptural logic and revelation demands that it does.

This aberrant theology, we believe, represents a dangerous drift toward liberalism with its denial of the inerrancy of Scripture and with it, a humanistic theology which denies both the sovereignty and exhaustive knowledge of Almighty God.

All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from a paper entitled: "God And The Future" written by Dr. Boyd in January, 1999 for presentation to concerned pastors and BGC personnel who were asking for a clarification of his position on these vital issues.

Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?

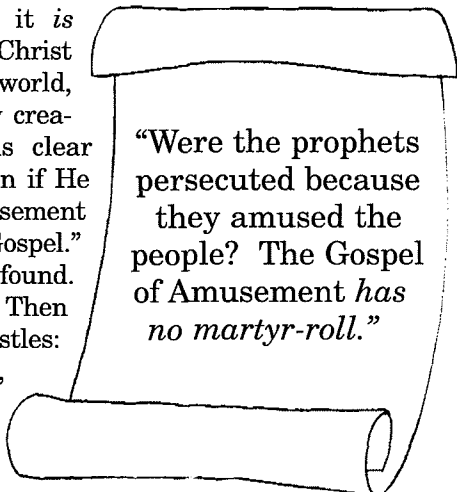
By Archibald Brown

(A Friend of C. H. Spurgeon)

An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it. During the past few years it has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until now the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people with a view of winning them!

From speaking out, as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony; then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day; then she has tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of "reaching for the masses."

My first contention is that providing amusements for the people is *nowhere spoken of in Scripture* as a function of the church. If it is Christian work, why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is clear enough! So it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the Gospel." No such words, however, can be found. It did not seem to occur to Him. Then again, "And He gave some, apostles: and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers... for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11, 12). Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them.



"Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people? The Gospel of Amusement *has no martyr-roll.*"

Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people? The Gospel of Amusement *has no martyr-roll.*

Again, providing amusement is in *direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ* and all His apostles. What was to be the attitude of the church to the world? "Ye are the SALT," not the sugar-

candy. Something the world will spit out, not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead." He was in awful earnestness. Had He introduced more of the "bright and pleasant" elements into His mission he would have been more popular.

When many went back because of the searching nature of His preaching, I do not hear Him saying: "Run after those friends, Peter, and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow. Something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick, Peter, we must get the people somehow." Jesus pitied sinners, sighed over them, wept over them, but never sought to amuse them.

In vain will the epistles be searched to find any trace of the gospel of amusement. Their message is: Come out—keep out—keep clean out.

How did the apostles carry on their work? Anything approaching fooling is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the Gospel and employed no other weapon. After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the church had a prayer meeting, but they did not pray, "Lord, grant unto Thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation they may show this people how happy we are." If they "ceased not" from preaching Christ, they had no time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:1-4). They "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), or right side up. Just now the world is turning the church "upside down." That is the only difference. The Lord clear the church of all the rot and rubbish that the devil has imposed upon her, and bring us back to apostolic methods!

Lastly, the Mission of Amusement *fails to effect the end desired*. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and the scoffers who thank God because the church met them halfway speak and testify. Let the heavy laden, who found peace through the concert, not keep silence. Let the drunkards, to whom the dramatic entertainment had been God's first link in the chain of their conversion, stand forth. There are none to answer. The Mission of Amusement produces no converts.

Now let the appeal be made to those who, repudiating every other method, staked every thing on the Book and the Holy Spirit. Ten thousand times ten thousand declares the plain preaching of the Word was, first to last, the cause of their salvation.

How about the other side? Though I have never seen a sinner saved, I have seen any number of backsliders manufactured by this

new method. Over and over have young Christians come to me in tears, as they had lost their peace and fallen into evil. Over and over again has the confession been made, "I began to go wrong by attending amusements patronized by Christians." A young man, in agony of soul, said to me, "I never thought of going to the theatre until my minister told me there was no harm in it! I went, and it has led me from bad to worse. I am a miserable backslider, and he is responsible for it."

When young converts begin to damp off [English phrase, meaning to wilt or rot], forsake the gatherings for prayer, and grow worldly, I almost always find that worldly Christianity was responsible. This thing is working rottenness in the church and blasting her service for the King. Under the pretense of "reaching the world" it is carrying our sons and daughters back into the world.

It will be no wonder if the Holy Spirit, insulted, withdraws His presence. "COME OUT" is the call for today. Put away evil from among you. Cast down the world's altars. Cut down her groves. Spurn her assistance. Decline, as your Master did, the testimony of demons, for "He suffered them not to speak." Renounce all the policy of the age. Trample on Saul's armour.

Grasp the Book of God. Trust the Spirit who wrote its pages. Fight with this weapon only and always. Cease to amuse and seek to arouse. Shun the claps of a delighted audience and seek for the sobs of a convicted one. Give up trying to please folk who have only the thickness of their ribs between their souls and hell. Warn, plead, entreat, as those who feel the waters of eternity creeping up.

Let the church again confront the world; testify against it; meet it only behind the cross, and, like her Lord, *she shall overcome and share the victory.*

The Battle Rages On In The I.C.C.

By Jo Ann BeVier

At certain times contacts for information and help from RAS concentrates on one group or organization. This governs our articles in The Discerner. We have lately (in the past few months) been receiving a number of calls regarding the Boston Church of Christ, now known as the ICC or International Churches of Christ.

We wrote an article in the Oct-Nov-Dec 1994 issue of The Discerner entitled "The Boston Church of Christ." During that year also we had numerous contacts regarding the movement. Now it seems the ICC has aggressively pursued its goal and "the battles rages on."

Computer web sites are crowded with articles and testimonies, media reports, links, etc. on the ICC. These are from both international and national sources. Just a few of these are from: London Church of Christ, Madrid Church of Christ, Nairobi Christian Church (Kenya), Singapore Central Christian Church (ICC), Paris Church of Christ, Taipei Christian Church (Taiwan). The ones in the USA cover practically every state with experiences of former ICC members. One URL that carries much information is: <http://www.tolc.org> They formerly focused on the London Church of Christ, now they carry information on the ICC's worldwide activities. The topics on the web vary as follows: ICC: Saints or Sinners?, Twisted Scriptures, Open Letters, Dare to Question, The Hard Way, Responding to the Boston Movement/ICC, The Verdict Is In, Pain From a Cult. We counted 105 which was just a sample. Anyone seeking information would certainly not find a shortage of sources.

In the Spring of 1991 Kip McKean's charge was to multiply churches worldwide and super churches were to be built in every nation of the world. In 1991 some of the churches and their attendance were: Boston - 4,700, New York - 3,900, Chicago - 2,500, London - 1,300, Manila - 1,100, San Paulo - 1,000, etc. Kip McKean started with 30 members in Boston and the movement has grown to nearly 200,000 members worldwide.

Kip McKean was a product of the Crossroads Church of Christ pastored by Chuck Lucas. Lucas had started as Campus Minister working with students and in fraternities on the University of Florida campus. McKean was converted out of a fraternity by Crossroads in

Gainesville, Florida. Crossroads was very aggressive and started the Partner/Discipler system which Kip McKean used to an even stronger degree. Total commitment to the Boston Church and McKean were now emphasized. The Boston Church demanded that all the other churches in the movement come under their direction. It was while in Boston that McKean started his own movement.

The churches that were (and are) started usually take the name of the city they are in for their name, i.e., Boston Church of Christ/Boston International Church of Christ. Kip McKean has absolute control over the group. They are the "only true church." If one doesn't measure up to the standards of the ICC they are sent out of the group and are lost and will end up in hell. The pressure on members is extreme; the turnover rate is high.

Because of their recruitment tactics the ICC has been banned from the campuses of many universities and colleges. Some of them are: University of Nebraska, Georgia Tech, University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology (in Australia). Also, colleges in Illinois and many others consider the church a cult. A report early this year (2000) from London appeared in the Evening Standard entitled "Cult Recruitment Goes Into Orbit." It stated that as this century unfolds cult recruitment campaigns are in overdrive. It goes into detail on some of the individual cases and what is happening. A former university chaplain and army intelligence officer has helped many families rescue their young people. The ICC is cited as being the cult with which many of these people (mostly young people) became involved. The tactic is to get recruits into a gradual drift toward commitment and the more they attend meetings the harder it is to pull them back. One of the techniques used is control of a recruit's time. They are bombarded with phone calls and "lovebombed" with affectionate messages of the cult's "love" for them. Gradually their identity is stripped away. They are given new rules to live by; a dependence on the group is developed. They are to alienate themselves from parents, family and friends and the recruit is to give their money and possessions to the church. They are even told who to date and marry and are responsible in these areas to a "discipler."

Another report appearing in the Jewish World Review entitled "Cults on Campus," though some of the story was based at the University of Maryland, has national implications. The article states that at that particular university a recent survey of 366 students found that 35% had been asked to join what they thought to be a cult. The report went on to say that all parents should talk to their young

people about dangerous groups and should seek qualified cult counseling if their son or daughter becomes involved.

Cult experts say it is crucial for parents to maintain contact with their children, even after a failed attempt to get them out. This is what the cult predicts will happen and uses this desertion to their advantage.

To further substantiate the growing aggressiveness and danger of the ICC are the following excerpts from the Dallas Morning News, May 5, 2000 article entitled, "International Church of Christ Celebrates Despite Criticism."

. . . A crowd of 10,000 celebrated its 10th anniversary as the Dallas-Fort Worth International Church of Christ. The church started with about 100 members and now has 2,500 attending every Sunday.

. . . Ex-members protested warning of the strong recruiting efforts and belief that only the church's members will be saved. They also say the one-on-one (disciplers) program interferes with people's personal lives and also requires them to give their financial means.

. . . The ICC has generated questions on college campuses.

. . . Students who are involved in the church find themselves dropping down to one or two classes a semester to meet the demands of the church on their time for recruiting, Bible study and other activities.

This quotation comes from an article regarding the ICC: "This aggressive group promotes itself as a 'fundamentalist Christian Church.' It isn't. It is a fundamentalist Bible-based cult that uses coercion, phobia indoctrination and strict control techniques to gain and keep its members" (Freedom in Christ Newsletter).

After studying the materials from and about the Boston Movement/ICC It is obvious they fit the definition of a cult. With the ever-growing number of cults and cultic groups it is important to recognize them and listen to the admonition that "The Battle Rages on!"

What Would Mary Say To Roman Catholics?

By Daryl Griffin

You are right about my son. Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, fully God, and fully human. I was a poor woman, and I became pregnant before I was married even though I never slept with any man. How could I explain this to every one? People of my generation would reject me and even curse me. But the angel Gabriel told me the most wonderful news. This son was no ordinary son. He was the Son of God. This honor was so much greater than my hardships that I burst into praise of God. Luke recorded this in Scripture: "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Luke 1:47-49). I praise Him in heaven now, and many people now understand that I was blessed, because I had the honor of birthing the Son of God into this world. It is other things that people are saying about me that hurt me. I would like this chance to clear up some of these rumors.

The first rumor I would like to dispel is this: People are saying that I want you to pray to me and worship me. The New Testament never tells you to worship me. Some say Gabriel worshipped me. All he said was, "Hail, O favored one!" (Luke 1:28), To say "hail" is just a formal greeting. When he said I was highly favored he was speaking of God's kindness to me in allowing me to be the mother of Jesus. Just because God showed me this kindness does not mean I am worthy of your worship.

Some say Elizabeth worshipped me. All she said was, "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Since God blessed me so much, there is a good reason to praise God, not me. God also blessed Jesus, the fruit of my womb, but in a different way. God gave Jesus the Holy Spirit beyond measure (John 3:34).

Some say I acknowledged people's right to worship me when I prayed "Behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed." I didn't say all generations should worship me, or pray to me, or even venerate me. I was just thanking God for the high privilege He gave me. I was happy that people would not look at me as just a poor moth-

er who had a child out of wedlock, but that this was an honorable thing from God. None of these examples say that you would worship me, on the contrary, we worshipped God for the undeserved kindness He was showing in my life and to the world.

An angel came to Joseph, but he didn't tell Joseph to worship me. Angels sang praises to God in front of the shepherds, but they didn't even mention my name (Luke 2:8-20). The Magi came and worshipped Jesus and presented gifts to Him, but they didn't worship me (Matthew 2:11). In fact, one time a woman began to praise me and Jesus rebuked her (Luke 11:27-28): "...a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!'" But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it."

You will not find anyone praying to me or worshipping me for four whole centuries. Jesus said, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:10). Some people say, "I am not worshipping, I am *venerating*." No matter what you call it, I don't feel comfortable when people focus on me instead of God. Do what I do; worship God! Some people say, "I'm not praying to Mary, I am asking her to pray for me." If prayer is directing your thoughts and concerns heavenward, then what is the difference between what you do when you pray to God and what you do when you pray to me? Don't just direct your prayers heavenward; direct them specifically to God in the name of Jesus.

Some people say that when I told people to "do whatever he (Jesus) tells you" at the wedding in Cana, I was indicating that I was some sort of mediator or "mediatrix." No! I was only telling them that it was appropriate for the Son of God to give the orders, not me. Check it out in John 2:1-11. When people pray to me I am not listening. God doesn't want me to listen because He wants to hear your prayers first-hand. I wonder why these people don't just pray to God themselves. The Bible says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5). Some say Jesus is a mediator in one way and I am mediator in another. The Bible says there is only one mediator. The Bible also says you have direct access to God through Jesus. Look at these verses:

Ephesians 2:18 "through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

Ephesians 3:11-12 "This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him."

Hebrews 4:15-16 "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

You have direct access because of Jesus. Now you can boldly pray to God. To do otherwise is to doubt that Jesus is a good enough mediator.

Jesus said (John 14:13), "Whatever you ask in my name [sic.], I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The Apostle Paul said (Colossians 3:17), "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." I don't want to be the recipient of your prayers or your praise; only God is worthy of that.

The next rumor I would like to dispel is that I was sinless. If I am sinless the way they say I am, then why didn't Jesus or the Apostles ever mention this? In fact, Jesus corrected me several times. At the wedding in Cana I started to tell Jesus what to do. I was out of line. He had to say to me (John 2:4), "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." My message to you is the same as what I said next to the people at the wedding, "Do whatever He [sic.] tells you." See also Luke 2:49 and Matthew 12:46-49.

The first person to say I was sinless came some 300 years after the completion of the Bible. Later, some theologians said that I not only was sinless, but I was the first person to be born without the sin of Adam. Pope Pius IX agreed with them and made this church dogma in 1854. They thought the only way for Jesus to be free from a sin nature was if He had a mother who did not have the sin nature. God didn't need a two-step process. Scripture never teaches that I was "immaculately conceived." God justifies all His children through the blood of Jesus. I am no exception. Jesus is sinless because God the Father lives in Him (John 14:10) and because of His own obedience to God. Paul said (Philippians 2:8), "(Jesus) being found in human form he humbles himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." That had nothing to do with me. I need Jesus as much as anyone. It is not my "sinlessness" that made Jesus sinless, but Jesus' sinless sacrifice that brought forgiveness for sins; even mine! When I

saw Jesus on the cross I was not just a mother seeing her son abused, I was a sinner like everyone else watching God's Son die to save me.

After Jesus ascended into heaven I, and other women, and the Apostles prayed together. (Note that they did not pray through me [Acts 1:13-14]). Peter gave the first evangelistic message (Acts 2:14-20) to tell people how they can be saved (Note that he never mentioned me). Peter told us to repent (Acts 2:38). I had to repent of my sins to receive Jesus. So don't ask me to plead for your forgiveness. Go to Jesus.

Another rumor started about me was that I never consummated my marriage with Joseph, and that we never had any children together. I guess people thought consummating our marriage would compromise the theological importance of my virginity. Don't get me wrong, I was a virgin when Jesus was born, but after that, it was not necessary for me to stay away from the man I married. Not only were we married, we had at least six children together. Count them: (Mark 6:3) "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" He had four brothers and at least two sisters. Some consider it theologically inconsistent for me to ever have children by Joseph. One of these wrote a book (written after the Bible was completed) called *Protoevangelium of James*. This writer claims that Joseph had these children by an earlier marriage. Others claim that they were not brothers and sisters, but cousins (Jerome, ca. AD 383).

Four hundred years after the completion of the Bible some people stated another rumor that I never died; instead, Jesus transported my body and soul into heaven. Pope Pius XII made this official Roman Catholic Dogma in 1950. The Bible never says anything close to this. Theologians through the centuries have been so presumptuous! It is important to read God's inspired Word, and not go beyond what it says. In the last verses of the Bible Jesus warns us: "I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy in this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Revelation 22:19-22).

The Bible also tells us clearly the essence of the Gospel:

Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also

received, that Christ died for your sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures... (1 Corinthians 15:1-3).

The Gospel that saves is all about Jesus; His death for us, His burial, and His resurrection. You will never find a passage where I am part of God's saving plan for all. I am a sinner like all other Christians. If I were otherwise, the Bible would have made that clear. Here is what the Bible says about those who teach otherwise (Galatians 1:8-9): "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."

God wants you to worship Him only. The only way to worship Him is through His Son, the only mediator between God and humanity. Talk to Him directly with no man-invented go-betweens.

BOOK REVIEW

A Twist of Faith

By Berit Kjos

Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson

For a number of years women have challenged the male dominance in the business world. Some success has been achieved for their efforts.

Now, according to author Berit Kjos, women are challenging male dominance in the administration and ministry of the church. Feminists have been at the forefront of the women's efforts to reshape theology in favor of women.

The author has conducted exhaustive research in supporting her theses on women's activities that promote their agenda. She has visited numerous conferences, both large and small, to gain firsthand information on women's efforts for superiority. Following each conference Kjos has interviewed one or more attendees to assess the purpose of the gathering and how those individuals have been positively affected.

The paradigm women leaders have chosen includes a number of filters through which they assemble their tenets. The filters are the occult, New Age, Eastern Mysticism, feminism and environmental issues. All of this is to help them re-image God, themselves, the Bible, and the world. This obviously is the work of Satan, the "angel of light" who causes women to mix biblical words with pagan beliefs until Christianity loses its uniqueness.

The extent of their departure from Scripture and the character of God is reflected in a statement from a book strongly recommended for their reading – "This is a book that invites women to define for themselves what is sacred." That is, women, not God, would define what is sacred.

One of the most common ritual practices in their gatherings is the formation of a circle. They call the circle a "holy place." In this circle participants would intone incantations in hypnotic rhythm. Another circle often used is the "Sophia" circle. Sophia is the goddess of wisdom who is the feminist's authority. Their goal is to develop a "mother image" for God which would ultimately free a woman to do her own will without any shame.

According to the author, as women gather for various conferences their faces are pictures of sadness, anger, pain and oppression. This

was especially true of the 1995 "Women and the United Nations" conference meeting in San Francisco, a preparation for a world conference to meet in Beijing later that year. Over 15,000 women representing a variety of non-governmental organizations met to determine the agenda for Beijing. In the session on "Women, Religion and Culture" Christianity was labeled as imperialistic, patriarchal, ego-centric, racial, and homophobic.

Bella Abzug, former Congresswoman, was the leader of women's activities in Beijing. She led a group called "Daughters of the Earth" who created numerous "goddesses" to whom they pledged their devotion. Fortunately, there were some organizations representing Biblical principles and the Christian message.

The author has frequently compared the theology of this activist women's group with Biblical interpretation to demonstrate the Satanic influence on this aberrant movement.

It is obvious that this is a political movement through which women wish to gain power. It is surfacing in many areas, some of which are very conservative. It appears that its momentum will increase rather than decrease which is alarming. One can only anticipate its affect on feminist spirituality in the church.

BOOK REVIEW

The Facts on Psychic Readings

By John Ankerberg & John Weldon

Reviewed by William A BeVier

This is another booklet in the series of contemporary issues of concern to Christians. We currently stock 28 of these small, rather inexpensive (\$3.00), but important booklets.

The subtitle of this booklet is "What Is the Real Source of Psychic Powers?" As usual, this 48-page booklet also is documented by the authors.

Topics presented include what is a psychic and what are psychic readings?, involvement of the CIA and the US military in psychic research, parapsychology and psychics, the real power behind psychics, and biblical conclusions on the subjects.

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