

The Discerner

“Hereby know of truth and the
we the spirit spirit of error”

Volume 23, Number 1

January • February • March 2003

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

Editorial	2
<i>William A. BeVier</i>	
Islamic Jesus vs. Biblical Jesus	4
<i>James Sundquist</i>	
An Era of Evangelical Erosion	14
<i>Dr. David L. Larsen</i>	
Harry Potter – A Pastor’s Response	18
<i>Pastor Chris Whitney</i>	
Book Reviews	30

The Discerner

Volume 23, Number 1
January • February • March 2003

Editorial Committee

Dr. William A. BeVier
Timothy J. Buege

Published Quarterly
Price \$5.00 for 4 issues
Foreign subscriptions extra

5693 Geneva Avenue N
Oakdale, MN 55128
1-651-777-7220 / 1-800-562-9153
FAX 651-777-7233

EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

In this issue we are presenting the article promised in the last issue comparing the Biblical Jesus with Jesus as presented in the Koran. Muhammad obviously had contacts with a form of Christianity and a form of Judaism. The Koran has numerous quotations and references to the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is also obvious the contacts Muhammad had with Christianity were a corrupted type, probably a form of Nestorians. His concept of Jesus certainly is not that revealed in Scripture. At the present time we need to learn all we can about Islam and James Sundquist's article should advance our learning. James Sundquist's e-mail address is: rocksalt@verizon.net His website is: <http://www.prophecyupdate.com>

We welcome to the pages of THE DISCERNER another article by Dr. David L. Larsen. Dr. Larsen is a former Vice President of Religion Analysis Service and currently serves on our Board of Reference. Though semi-retired, he continues as Associate Director of the Professional Doctoral Programs at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and he continues an active speaking ministry and the writing of books and articles. He is a careful researcher and is current in his studies.

We also are introducing a new writer to our readers. He is Chris Whitney, Associate Pastor of Ambassador Baptist Church in Shoreview, Minnesota. The subject of the Harry Potter series of books is a topic of discussion and concern among Christians today. Pastor Whitney has given us ideas to think about on this subject.

We have included one book review in this issue. We frequently receive books which the author or publisher wants us to

review (or carry in our stock). We can't review all of them, but occasionally one is specially deserving of review. We believe the book reviewed by Ervin Ingebretson fits this standard.

Also, we have received a new shipment of Hazel Macek's book Biblical View of Catholicism (\$5.00, 116 pp). The author is a former Roman Catholic who was converted to Christ by reading her Bible. She has written a practical guide for anyone wishing to reach a Roman Catholic for Christ. The book is reviewed on page 27 of our current catalog.

By now each of you should have received our Winter Letter updating events at RAS. We have started preparation of a new catalog that we hope to publish soon. As is expected, both the letter and the catalog are costly and we would be grateful for any financial support you can give us at this time. But even more important than finances, are your prayers. Increasingly we realize we are in a spiritual struggle, as are you, and we all need the Lord's help.

ISLAMIC JESUS VS. BIBLICAL JESUS

By James Sundquist

There are at least twenty-two Scriptural reasons why they are not the same Jesus.

The Islamic position on the identity of Jesus in this article is taken from the Koran and Hadiths, which together comprise the ultimate authority in the Muslim religion. Most Muslims are not aware of most of these texts. Likewise, most Christians are not aware of their own Biblical Scriptures defending the identity of Christ. And certainly, many Christians are not aware of either the Biblical or Islamic scriptures describing Jesus Christ. So, I believe it is crucial to bring into focus exactly what Islam says about Jesus and then compare it to what the Bible says about who Jesus is.

1. Islamic Jesus was created and not eternal.

The similitude of Jesus before Allah is that of Adam: he created him from dust, then said to him, "Be," and he was. Koran Sura 3:59.

The Biblical Jesus is eternal.

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, [though] thou be little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of thee shall he come forth unto me [that is] to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2. "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I am." John 8:58.

2. Islamic Jesus is a created human.

He created him [Jesus] from dust, then said unto him: "Be." Koran: Sura 3:59.

The Biblical Jesus is the Creator of everything that is.

"All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made." John 1:3. "For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether [they be] thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." Col. 1:16-17.

3. Islamic Jesus is not the Lamb of God who was slain.

That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah." But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only

conjecture to follow, for of surety they killed him not. Koran, Sura 4:157.

The Biblical Jesus is the Lamb of God.

“Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.”
John 1:29.

4. Islamic Jesus who will not return to earth until Judgment Day.

And (Jesus) shall be a sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment): Therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: This is a Straight Way. Koran, Sura 43:61.

The Biblical Jesus appeared to the Apostle Paul (Saul) after Christ's ascension (at Saul's conversion).

“And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Acts 9:5.

5. Islamic Jesus prophesied (but did not send) the coming of Muhammad (Islamic Jesus did not send the Holy Spirit).

And (remember) when ‘Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: “O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Tawraat [(Torah) which came] before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.” But when he (Ahmad, i.e., Muhammad) came to them with clear proofs, they said: “This is plain magic.” [al-Sasff, 61:6].

But the Biblical Jesus sent the Holy Spirit (Comforter), which came at Pentecost 50 days later NOT five hundred years later (Muhammad).

But the Comforter which is the Holy Spirit. John 14:26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, which proceeded from the Father, he shall testify of me. John 15:26. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. John 16:7. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence. Acts 1:5.

6. Islam which says Salvation is found only in the Five Pillars of Islam.

Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive (jahadu) with might and main in Allah's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah. They are the people who will achieve salvation. Sura 9:20. Salvation can only be found in the Five Pillars of Shahada (Testifying of God's Oneness), Salat (Prayer), Saum (Fasting), Zakat (Charity), and Haji (Pilgrimage).
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/pillars/intropillars.html>

Pillars (Hadith Sahih Bukhari, Vol 1, Book 2, No 7). Those who believe, and emigrate and strive with might and mind, in Allah's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank in the sight of Allah: they are the people who will achieve (salvation). Sura 9:20-22 At-Tawbah, the Repentance. If any do deeds of righteousness, — be they male or female — and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them. Sura 4:124 an-Nisaa, the Women.

In the Biblical Jesus, salvation is found in none other than Himself.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among man, whereby we must be saved. Acts 4:12. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Romans 10:9. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. Acts 16:31.

Neither is there salvation in
any other: for there is none
other name under heaven
given among man, whereby
we must be saved Acts 4:12

7. Islamic Jesus who is an involuntary Slave to Allah.

(In that a slave is NOT free.)

I will then say what the Pious Slave Jesus the son of Mary said... (Hadith, narrated Nafi, 007.063.209). You'd better go to Jesus, Allah's slave (Hadith, narrated Anas, 009.093.532, Volume 9, Book 93, Number 507).

But the Biblical Jesus made Himself a voluntary servant.

Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:6-8. And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (not slaves). John 8:32. (We don't trade our slavery to sin in for slavery to God!) If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall

be free indeed (not slaves). John 8:36. (If Jesus is not free, how can we be free as His followers?)

For he that is called in the Lord, [being] a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, [being] free, is Christ's servant. 1 Corinthians 7:22. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman (slave) and her son: for the son of the bondwoman(slave) shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman (slave), but of the free. Galatians 4:30-31. (Muhammad is the descendant of the son (Ishmael) of the bondwoman (Hagar)). But as many as received him(Jesus Christ), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believed on his name. John 1:12.

8. Islamic Jesus was never crucified and therefore was not resurrected.

And because of their saying (in boast), "We killed Messiah 'Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), the Messenger of Allah," – but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it appeared so to them the resemblance of "Eesa (Jesus) was put over another man (and they killed that man), and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely; they killed him not [i.e., "Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)]. But Allah raised him ['Eesa (Jesus)] up (with his body and soul) unto Himself (and he is in the heavens). And Allah is Ever All Powerful, All Wise. [Al-Nisaa' 4:157-158].

Versus the Biblical Jesus who (by His death and resurrection) saves His people from their sins.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. John 11:25. And if Christ be not risen, then [is] our preaching vain and your faith [is] also vain. 1 Corinthians 15:14.

9. Islamic Jesus is not the God in the flesh as the Messiah.

Surely, they have disbelieved who say: Allah is the Messiah ['Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam [Mary]. [al-Maa'idah 5:72]. Surely, disbelievers are those who said: Allah is the third of three (in a Trinity). But there is no Allah (god) (none who has the right to be worshipped) but One Allah (God = Allah). And if they cease not from what they say, verily, a painful torment will befall on the disbelievers among them. [al-Maa'idah 5:73]. And, the Islamic Jesus is NOT the Son of God (whoever believes this will be thrown into the fire). Then the sects differed [i.e., the Christians about 'Eesa (Jesus)], so woe unto the disbelievers [those who gave false witness by saying that 'Eesa (Jesus) is the son of Allah] from the Meeting of a great Day (i.e., the Day of Resurrection, when they will be thrown in the blazing Fire). Koran, Maryam, Sura 19:34-38. That they ascribe a

son (or offspring or children) to the Most Gracious (Allah). But it is not suitable for (the Majesty of) the Most Gracious (Allah) that He should beget a son (or offspring or children). There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes unto the Most Gracious (Allah) as a slave. Koran, Maryam, 19:88-93. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. Koran, Sura 4:17.

But the Biblical Jesus who is the Word Made Flesh and dwelt among us and is the Son of God.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth. John 1:14. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son born of a woman. Galatians 4:4.

10. Islamic Jesus cannot be worshipped.

And behold, Allah will say – O Jesus Son of Mary, did you say to men, worship me and my mother as gods beside Allah? He will reply – Glory to you, I could never say what I had not right [to say]. Koran, Sura a-Maa'idah, 5:116. Christ the son of Mary was no more a messenger: many were the messengers that passed away before him. Koran, Sura 5:75.

The Biblical Jesus who is commanded to be worshipped (by both men and angels).

And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:11. And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, and let all the angels of God worship him. Hebrews 1:6.

11. Islamic Jesus not fit to be intercessor.

They will go to Jesus who will say, I am not fit for this undertaking, but you'd better go to Muhammad whose sins of the past and future had been forgiven (by Allah). Hadith Volume 9, Book 93, Number 507.

But the Biblical Jesus is the ONLY mediator between God and man. Jesus is alone the sinless Lamb of God. How could Mohammad, a sinner, be more fit than Jesus who was sinless? Regarding mediator and intercessor, the dictionary often uses the words interchangeably, though technically, mediator in a sense is the neutral party acting as an arbitrator between two parties, where an intercessor represents the petitioner. In any case, Jesus Christ is BOTH Mediator and Intercessor.

For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 2:5. But now hath he (Jesus)

obtained a more excellent ministry, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Romans 8:34. And for this cause He (Christ) is the mediator of the New Testament. Hebrews 9:15. Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy (fit) to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not, behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (Jesus Christ), hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. Revelation 5:2, 3, 5.

12. Islamic Jesus will judge by the Law of the Koran and not by the Gospel. (Fatch-ul Ban, pp 304 and 305, vol. 7).

The Biblical Jesus will judge by both the Old and New Testament (Gospel).

For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law (Torah), till all be fulfilled. Matthew 5:18. He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him.; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. John 12:48. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of man by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. Romans 2:16.

13. Islamic Jesus is simply another prophet.

Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them. Koran, Sura 2:136; 2:84.

But the Biblical Jesus who is the name above all names.

Far above all principality, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. Ephesians 1:21.

14. Islamic Jesus Returns in yellow garments.

Jesus (peace be upon him), He will descend (to the earth). When you see him, recognize him: a man of medium height, reddish fair, wearing two light yellow garments. Sunan Abu Dawud Book 37, Number 4310.

But the Biblical Jesus returns arrayed in white light.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment [was] white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne [was like] the fiery flame, [and] his wheels [as] burning fire. Daniel 7:9. (Some scholars believe the Ancient of days refers to the Father, but Jesus Christ sits on the

throne and the reference to “pure wool” is a picture of the Lamb of God who is none other than Jesus Christ.) His head (Jesus Christ’s) and [his] hairs [were] white like wool, as white as snow. Revelation 1:14. The following verses describe Christ’s Transfiguration, but are virtually identical to His portrayal as Ancient of Days and therefore His second coming. And was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. Matthew 17:2. And His raiment became shining. Exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. Mark 9:3. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment [was] white [and] glistening. Luke 9:29.

15. Islamic Jesus lands on a Minaret in Damascus, Syria.

Most Muslims believe that Jesus’ descent from heaven will be accomplished by resting His hands on the wings of two angels. He will descend onto the white minaret, situated in the eastern part of Damascus. He will invite the world to be Muslim including Christians and Jews. Mawdudi, A.A., Finality of Prophethood, pp. 58-61, and Vol. 18, Hadith No. 814. Hadrat Hudazifa b. Yama relates (with reference to Dajjal): When the Muslims will fall in lines to offer prayers, Christ son of Mary (PBUH) shall descend from heaven before their eyes. He will lead the prayers. When the prayers are over he will say to the people: “Clear the way between me and this enemy of God.” God will give victory to the Muslims over the hosts of Dajjal. The Muslims will inflict dire punishment upon the enemy. Even the trees and stones will cry out, “O Abdullah, O Abdul Rahman, O Muslim, come here is a Jew behind me, kill him.” In this way God will cause the Jews to be annihilated and Muslims shall be the victors. They will break the Cross, slaughter the swine and abolish Jizya (levied on non-Muslims). Mustadrak Hakim – A brief version of this tradition has been recorded in Muslim. Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath-ul-Bari Vol. VI, p. 450 declares this tradition to be authentic.

The Biblical Jesus descends and lands on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem.

And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which [is] before Jerusalem on the east. Zechariah 14:4. Which also said, You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven. Acts 1:11.

16. Islamic Jesus returns on the wings of two angels.

Mawdudi, A. A. Finality of Prophethood, pp. 58-61.

The Biblical Jesus is accompanied by the armies of heaven and the saints and all of His holy ones with Him.

And the Lord God shall come, and all the saints with thee.
Zechariah 14:5. And the armies which were in heaven followed
Him upon white horses. Revelation 19:14.

17. Islamic Jesus destroys Antichrist at Lydda (in Israel).

Christ (PBUH) will advance with the Muslims for fighting against
Dajjal (Antichrist).

The enemy will retreat before the powerful assault of Christ son of
Mary, and Dajjal will run away towards Israel by way of the slopes
of Afig (Reference to Tradition No. 21). Christ (PBUH) will pursue
Dajjal and destroy him on the airfield of Lydda (Traditions No. 10-
14-15). A great slaughter of the Jews will ensue and every one of
them will be annihilated. The nation of the Jews will be extermin-
ated (Traditions No. 9-15-21). At the proclamation of truth by
Christ, the Christian religion will become extinct (Traditions No. 1-
2-4-6). Later the son of Mary will pursue Dajjal and will overtake
him at the gate of Lydda and put him to death. (Muslim, Dhikr
Dajjal; Abu Dawud, Kitab ul-Malahim, Bab: Khuruj; Dajjal;
Tirmidhi, Abwab-ul-Fitan; Bab: Fi Fitna al-Dajjal, Ibn Majah, Kitab
ul-Fitna, Bab: Fitna al-Dajjal). Afig is a mountain near the city of
Fiq in Syria in the Golan Heights.

The Biblical Jesus destroys Antichrist with the spirit of His mouth at His return to the Mount of Olives.

And then shall that Wicked [One] be revealed, whom the Lord shall
consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the
brightness of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 2:8. See also Revelation
1:16 and 19:15.

18. Islamic Jesus who returns will not be pierced.

They killed him not nor crucified him. Koran, Sura 4:157.

The Biblical Jesus was pierced for our transgressions.

They shall look upon me whom they have pierced. Zechariah
12:10.

19. Islamic Jesus will marry a woman and have children.

He (Jesus) will live for forty years during which he will marry, have
children, and perform Hajj (pilgrimage). Wali ad-Din, Miskat, Al-
Masabih, tr. James Robson, Vol. II, p. 1159, Sahih Muslim, Vol. I, p.
92.

The Biblical Jesus will marry His Bride of Christ (the Christian Church) at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him; for the marriage
of the Lamb is come and His wife made herself ready. Revelation
19:7.

20. Islamic Jesus will break every cross.

Christ son of Mary (PBUH) shall descend from heaven before their eyes. Even the trees and stones will cry out, “O Abdullah, I Abdul Rahman, O Muslim, come, here is a Jew behind me, kill him.” In this way God will cause the Jews to be annihilated and Muslims shall be the victors. They will break the Cross, slaughter the swine and abolish Jizya (levied on Christians and Jews). Mustadrak Hakim – A brief version of this tradition has been recorded in Muslim. Hafiz Ibn Hajar in Fath-ul-Bari Vol. VI, p. 450 declares this tradition to be authentic.

The Biblical Jesus instead breaks every curse of sin and death.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed [is] everyone that hangs on a tree. Galatians 3:13.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb [Jesus Christ] shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him. Revelation 22:3.

21. Islamic Jesus will die forty years after his return.

He (Jesus) will perish all religions except Islam. He (Jesus) will destroy the Antichrist and will live on the earth for forty years and then he will die. Sunan Abu Dawud Book 37, Number 4310. After his death, he will be buried beside the grave of the Prophet Muhammad. Wali ad-Din, Miskat Al-Masabih, tr. James Robson, Vol. II, p. 1159; Sahih Muslim, Vol. I, p. 92.

But the Biblical Jesus is alive forevermore.

I [am] He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Revelation 1:18.

22. Islamic Jesus: There is no Scripture in the Koran or Hadiths, which speaks of Jesus' love for the world.

The Biblical Jesus loves the world [the people in it.]

A new commandment I give unto you (Jesus Christ speaking), that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:14. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39. Peace [be] to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:23. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given [us] everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. 2 Thessalonians 2:16. Grace be with you, mercy, [and] peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 2 John 1:3. And from Jesus Christ, [who is] the faithful witness, [and] the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,... Revelation 1:5.

There you have it. Here are two different versions of Jesus Christ; one which is Islamic and one which is Biblical. Clearly the Islamic scriptures of the Koran, Hadiths, and Traditions and the Bible are not describing the same Jesus. So the question remains, does this make any difference? Well, clearly it does. Jesus Christ Himself said that many false Christs would come in His name claiming to be the Christ and DECEIVE many (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). The Apostle Paul is so severe in his warning that in Galatians he records that if any man preach a different Gospel (another Jesus) which is NO gospel at all, let him be eternally damned (Galatians 1:6-9). The Apostle John says that whoever denies Christ (as God's Son) is an antichrist. God is not an author of confusion. No, the Islamic Jesus is an imaginary Jesus. The Biblical Jesus is the Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Any other Jesus is the Prince of Darkness. So, I invite you to choose whom you will follow. If the Islamic Jesus is the true Christ, worship him and him only. If the Biblical Jesus is the Christ, worship Him and Him only.

And if it seems evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that [were] on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell, but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. Joshua 24:15.

Jesus Christ alone is prophesied in both the Old Testament and New Testament, both His First and His Second Coming.

And He alone can present us faultless, those whom He has redeemed. That He might present it (the Church) to Himself (Jesus Christ) a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:27. In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight.

Colossians 1:22. Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present [you] faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,... Jude 1:24.

The Islamic Jesus can't do this because he did NOT purchase the Church with his blood.

AN ERA OF EVANGELICAL EROSION

By Dr David L. Larsen,

Professor Emeritus of Preaching and Associate Director of the Professional Doctoral Programs, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

“I give you this charge: Preach the Word...for the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” 2 Tim. 4:2-4.

The great tragedy of religious liberalism was its wedding with culture in the interest of impacting culture. So liberal thinkers built on the foundations of Enlightenment rationalism and social Darwinianism. In so doing they gained certain prestigious institutional favor but they lost Biblical supernaturalism. “They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him” has been the sad and disappointed plaint of many of their congregants. Mainline denominations are dying and are left to divisively scrap over homosexual ordination and the like. In one mainline seminary in Chicago, consisting of many more women than men, the gay and lesbian caucus among the students regularly presents their chapel and a witch and her coven were recently featured at a chapel service.

A British cleric holds church funerals for deceased pets as he does for human beings. One Florida congregation features a stand-up bar with cocktails for members and guests before and after services. Sadly, only 15% of American congregations have grown by one member in the last five years. There is an informal Church of England support group in Oxford for clergy who admit they do not believe in God. We could multiply endlessly the pathetic chronicle of those who have lost the message of Christ and salvation. But what is the point?

The point is that many evangelical Christians do not seem to be aware of significant erosion not only in the reduction of their own numbers and decline in attendance but in the inclination of many leaders and shakers to address these issues by repeating the mistake of liberalism – impact culture by accommodating culture. Even the mild and irenic Dr. Millard Erickson writes in alarm over what he calls THE EVANGELICAL LEFT who are in danger of giving away the store. The Barthianization of evangelical institutions and thinking is proceeding apace and for others it is the Disneyfication or McDonaldization of the program that dooms many in the movement

to spiritual impotence and the removal of the candlestick (Revelation 2:5). But generalities will not suffice. Evidence is to be noted in several specific doctrinal arenas.

The Doctrine of the Full Inspiration of Holy Scripture

Accord on the total reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture was at one time the rallying cry of evangelical institutions and message. Soft spots have appeared and grievous crack and crevices are in clear view. Propositional theology is giving way to narrative-based theology, but apart from divinely revealed truth there is no theology, there is only anthropology. Feel-good theology is taking over evangelicalism and the Bible is seen as not altogether sufficient for our needs and purposes today. More creative images than the Bible stories, it is alleged, are most appealing. But there is no substitute for the Word. The Bible must define the nature of the church, not modern business or psychology.

Feel-good theology
is taking over
evangelicalism and
the Bible is seen
as not altogether
sufficient for our
needs and purposes
today.

Increasing evangelical capitulation to theistic evolution is but an example of moving away from Scripture. Dr. Stanley Grenz, formerly of Regent College in Vancouver and now of Baylor, has led the charge against the equation of the Word of God with the words of Scripture. In his book, BEYOND FOUNDATIONALISM, he denies that there is any inherent authority in the Bible itself but that the Bible becomes authoritative when the Spirit speaks through it. This is the old neo-orthodox notion that the Bible becomes the Word of God. We would argue that the Bible is always the Word of God in clear opposition to the postliberal agenda, which is swallowing many. Orthodoxy is predicated on an error-free Bible as Warfield, Hodge, and Carl Henry have stoutly maintained. Grenz sets up a false antinomy – he says that the truth is either propositional or personal and we say it is both.

The Cross of Christ and Salvation

Once the principle of Biblical authority is compromised, the door is open for an inevitable unraveling of other key doctrines. This is now apparent in some evangelical circles. The strong and sound statement on justification by faith alone entitled “The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration” has been roundly chal-

lenged by liberals and left-wing evangelicals. Dr. Roger Olson of the George Truett Seminary at Baylor has questioned the need for “forensic images” in salvation in his critique in the liberal *Christian Century*. The New Testament chair at an evangelical seminary has departed from the doctrine of substitutionary atonement. The popular author of a book chosen by *Christianity Today* a few years ago as book-of-the-year, decries “spiritual vampires who are always sniffing around for the blood.” This is close to blasphemy. One user-friendly pastor of a mega-church explains that the cross is nowhere in evidence in their multi-media center (their word for sanctuary) because they “don’t want anyone coming in to feel guilty.” Tell that to the Apostle Paul, cf., Galatians 6:14; 1 Corinthians 2:2.

So even clarity and soundness on salvation yield to fuzziness and heresy. Add to this the article by a leading evangelical advocating a return to the doctrine of purgatory in an effort to stimulate holy living! The speciously evil doctrine of universalism seems to be coming on strong right now in certain quarters and many are following John Stott in his denial that hell and the lake of fire are eternal (cf., Matthew 25:46). But if punishment is not eternal, is life in Christ to be eternal?

The Dialogue of Death

Inter-faith dialogue is sweeping across all lines. In the face of competing truth claims among world religions, one evangelical thinker of note has urged we “re-think” the idea that Christ is the only way. Is there no New Testament distinctive that will not come under attack by some in evangelicalism? The dialogue called ECT (Evangelicals and Catholics Together) has deeply disturbed our missionaries in Latin America with its condemnation of proselytism (winning Roman Catholics to Christ). The Pope insists that baptism is the root of unity and certainly nothing like the error of baptismal regeneration destroys evangelicalism quicker. Richard John Neuhaus, Roman Catholic leader in the dialogue, is an out-and-out Universalist, as are most Roman Catholics today. In their latest statement, the signatories have severely compromised the crucial doctrine of *sola Scriptura* (the Bible alone). Roman Catholics and Lutherans say they now agree on justification. Martin Luther would turn over in his grave.

Our Great God and the Future

A widespread cancer in evangelicalism right now is the teaching that God’s knowledge of the future is limited. Derived from the process theology of Alfred North Whitehead, this viewpoint, often called Open Theism, holds that God is in process as we are, and will become more knowledgeable, more loving, more kind, etc. This of course is errant nonsense and obviously the death knell for any predictive prophecy in Scripture.

But most evangelicals scarcely touch Biblical prophecy anyway. The harm done to “the blessed hope” expectation of believers by the date setters is incalculable (such as Hal Lindsey and Harold Camping and a raft of others). R. J. Sproul and the Reconstructionists are arguing that Biblical prophecy was basically fulfilled in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem and thus Revelation must be re-dated to before A.D. 70. Thus dominion theologians not only misconstrue grace in favor of their heavy legalism, but they make mishmash out of any future in eschatology. N. T. Wright, widely heard evangelical from Britain, not only seeks to make justification corporate rather than individual but he totally accepts realized eschatology, the idea that all prophecy has been fulfilled. The Australian Graeme Goldsworthy has likewise smothered all futurism in prophecy but virtually no voice is raised to caution readers and students about the serious deficiencies in this thinking. Grant Jeffries is captive to the silly Bible Codes and D. James Kennedy is into “gospel in the stars.” Why can’t we just stay with the Word of God as written?

This litany of doctrinal disaster could continue indefinitely. Obviously many evangelicals are in the stupor of doctrinal indifference. The miasma of modernity and postmodernity has drugged them into a spiritual coma. But what is worse, certain leaders and key thinkers are leading out in what is nothing less than the betrayal of “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.” We are seeing the maceration of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. And this is not by liberals as such but under the auspices of evangelicals. We need watchmen on the wall who will call out warnings to the true people of God. We are under assault by false prophets who are from within. These are not thieves and robbers and wolves from without – these are hirelings from within. “When the Son of Man cometh, will He find the faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

HARRY POTTER – A PASTOR’S RESPONSE

By Pastor Chris Whitney

The Harry Potter craze has taken the world of children’s literature by storm. Many see it as beneficial since so many children are now encouraged to read like never before. Others are fearful that these books could spawn in their child an interest in the occult. How should one respond to this cultural phenomenon?

This is not the first time our culture has been interested in witchcraft as a lifestyle, books such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Lord of the Rings* series had a tremendous effect on our culture in their own eras. Television programs such as *Bewitched*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, and *Charmed* have also contributed to our culture’s understanding and even misunderstanding of witchcraft. Reality based games such as *Dungeons and Dragons*, as well as a myriad of computer games have promoted and used occult imagery as a basis of their story line.

How should we as Christians respond? Would we really be so bold as to put the *Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis in the same category as Harry Potter? Why should a Christian parent balk at allowing their child to read Harry Potter and yet permit them to read about Asian in the *Chronicles of Narnia*?

Let us first turn our attention to Professor Alan Jacob’s view concerning this issue in an article titled “Do the Harry Potter books by Joanne K. Rowling promote witchcraft?”

1. There is more positive than negative in Harry Potter.

He writes “In most cases it would probably be better for Christians to be familiar with the Potter series, understanding its strengths and weaknesses, than to think they can keep their children – or others – from, reading it or being interested in it. If we are familiar with these books, we can help the children we influence see their possible dangers, and use them as a means to lead unbelievers towards a Christian worldview.” Professor Jacobs believes that these books are relatively harmless and that they don’t seem destined “to mislead the unwary into witchcraft and the occult.”

My Response:

Those who defend the reading of Harry Potter acknowledge that there are spiritually dark occultic-type elements to the books; however, they suggest that one must define those elements within the con-

text of the books themselves. Although they deny that the intent of the books is to encourage occultism, which seems to be true, they nevertheless encourage parents to guide their children through the books. The problem with that approach is that they focus too much on the things that are good in the books and justify those things, which are harmful. The issue is not whether there are good things within the books, the issue is whether or not as a parent, I want to expose my child to that which may be harmful to his faith and his understanding of what is right and wrong.

2. Harry Potter does not seek to promote occultism and witchcraft.

My Response:

It is true that the author's intent was not to lead children into witchcraft. She is quoted as saying: "About two-thirds of what I have written is my own invention, but about a third of what I incorporated into these stories was from the folklore of Britain." However, I doubt that a child reading Harry Potter would be concerned with that fact. The problem is that the books' main theme is surrounded by the practice of witchcraft, real or imagined. The plot and the practice of witchcraft are intertwined so that the hero of the story is the one practicing witchcraft, where traditionally in classical literature, the hero was the one fighting against those who were. (Example – Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz.)

3. The Magic described in Harry Potter is not real.

"Broomsticks really don't fly, and wands and spells with magical powers don't exist. The fact that they do in this engaging fantasy is no more likely to make a child or adult reader believe in real magic than reading about Peter Pan would generate belief in magical pixie dust."

My Response:

Perhaps this is true, however, witchcraft is a reality. There are those who do practice it and we confirm the teaching of Scripture that all who do so sin against God. The Harry Potter series tends to confuse this traditional belief by promoting at least the possibility that one can be a good person and still practice witchcraft. I believe this produces confusion in the mind of children when they evaluate the reality of those who do practice witchcraft in our world.

In My Opinion

A. The dangers of reading the Harry Potter Series.

The following is my conclusion to the issue of reading Harry Potter and why I would encourage parents to beware of their influence.

1). The Harry Potter books place evil men in a positive light.

The Scriptures speak of many wicked things of which man is capable. Although his depravity and sin are things, which can be forgiven through the completed work of Christ, his works are always condemned as being things worthy of God's wrath. Romans 1:32. Those who are Christ's are not to accept what is evil but rather to expose them for what they are. Ephesians 5:11.

2). The Harry Potter books blur the line between good and evil.

Living in a relativistic post-modern age, the believer must not be guilty of justifying what is wrong and condemning what is good. It is a cause for concern when those who have been thought of as evil are now placed in the role of hero. God is ever vigilant about what He considers good and what He considers as evil. The two cannot be exchanged without denying the immutability of His person and the veracity of what He has said. This is why the Scripture warns those who exchange the one for the other (Isaiah 5:20). Those who defend the Harry Potter books should take care that they do not find themselves defending what God calls wicked.

B. The discerning other works of literature.

In my opening comments, I asked the question: "Why should a Christian parent balk at allowing their child to read Harry Potter and yet permit them to read about Aslan in the Chronicles of Narnia?"

My hope is that the reader will see that I personally would place the Narnia and Wizard of Oz in a different category than Harry Potter. These stories do not place evil men in a good light, but instead they view the witch as the villain and witchcraft as evil. It is never been my purpose to suggest to parents that their child should never read a book with a witch contained in the story. However, when that book suggests, through the course of the story that witchcraft is just another acceptable means of getting what you want out of life, it is then that I choose to close the book.

BOOK REVIEW

A Matter of Basic Principles:
Bill Gothard & the Christian Life

By Don Veinot, Joy Veinot, and Ron Henzel,
Forward by Ron Rhodes
21st Century Press, 2002

Reviewed by Rev Ervin D. Ingebretson

The book opens with statements of concern about the style and content of the ministry of Bill Gothard by eight theologians/educators. They strongly recommend the reading of this book by pastors, Christian leaders, and alumni of Bill Gothard's seminars to be aware of alarming inconsistencies in Gothard's ministry to a host of young people.

The authors do not present this extensive study to be mean-spirited or severely critical of Bill Gothard's ministry but rather to be a warning concerning his personal opinions on myriad subjects supported by misinterpreted Scripture.

Bill Gothard was vaulted into popularity at a time when there was a spiritual vacuum in Christian ministries on evangelism and discipleship. He saw the need to make available, especially to young people, a presentation of principles dealing with life's issues. His original work was entitled "Institute for Basic Youth Conflicts" (IBYC). He later expanded on this curriculum to form a more comprehensive study helping young people deal with other issues of life. He also prepared a curriculum for home schooling and for pastors' education in the Gothard ministries.

Gothard teaches not ten commandments but seven "universal, non-optional principles" to govern any aspect of living.

The core of Gothard's ministry is vested in one word – "authority." He demands accountability to authority much like the military system. He emphasizes, even demands, in his teaching that everyone "live under the umbrella of authority."

Strangely enough, Gothard does not practice what he preaches. He was unwilling to submit to his Board of Institute ministries, so much so that some Board members out of utter disgust resigned. Drs. Radmacher, Allen, and Geisler offered to help Bill understand Scriptural interpretation. He rigidly denied any wrongful interpretation. His response was framed in the following statement: — "to disagree with Gothard was to disagree with God." He insisted God was his teacher.

A most glaring misuse of Scripture is his understanding of the grace of God. In fact, he did not agree that God's grace is free. For Gothard,

Biblical teaching on “grace” and “freedom in Christ” were noticeably absent. For him one must earn the grace of God by living under the authority of God. His understanding of the grace of God was limited to sanctification and not justification. Gothard has a very flawed application of Scripture. He considers himself an evangelical, but his teachings are far from it.

Gothard leans heavily on the Old Testament. Because of his emphases on authority his moralism turned to legalism, which in turn caused spiritual paralysis.

His opinions on the “courtship” game and dating are akin to the chain of command in the military. Get under proper authority and God will protect. For Gothard all authority is vested in the parent (cf. father). The father has control of the dating procedure. Gothard believes dating leads to sin. For this he references Genesis 6:5. The young man is actually to court the young lady’s parents. Even ungodly parents are included. The Scriptural bounds he uses are not balanced with love. Gothard lists fifteen rewards one receives by living under proper authority.

The authors have listed several other areas of life’s experiences in which Gothard has put for his opinions with supporting Scripture, misinterpreted as usual.

On May 14, 1980 scandal hit the Institute. Board members were shocked when they heard of the gross immorality committed by Steve Gothard, Bill’s brother. A total of fifteen of the Institute people were involved in sexual immorality. Bill’s cover-up of this behavior angered the members of the Board. Steve was moved to a remote location in Michigan. Former staff members revealed that Bill also was involved in inappropriate sexual conduct. Neither Bill nor Steve offered to step down from leadership. The Board members were infuriated because Bill refused to live under authority, as he demanded of others.

The authors have made reference to families that have been torn asunder and churches that have split as a result of the authoritative teaching of Bill Gothard. No doubt some were helped despite that erroneous Biblical interpretations.

The ministry of Bill Gothard has several cultic similarities. For example, a strong authoritative leader who refuses any oversight supervision; a leader who violates proper Scriptural interpretation; and a leader who guards personal idiosyncrasies that are specific signs of cultic personality.

One concurs wholeheartedly with the eight theologians/educators who recommend the reading of this critique by anyone who was influenced by this ministry.

[At the present RAS is not stocking this book, but we can inform anyone a source if interested in obtaining it.]

SUBSCRIBERS

If your mailing label reads XXIII-1 or Vol. 23, No. 1, your subscription expires with this issue. Please don't let your subscription expire. Renewals cost \$5.00 per year in the US. Foreign subscriptions cost extra to cover the additional postage.

Come visit Religion Analysis Service on the world wide web!

Our URL is: <http://www.ras.org>

Our e-mail address is: info@ras.org

RELIGION ANALYSIS SERVICE, INC.

5693 Geneva Avenue N
Oakdale, MN 55128

Address Service Requested

Non Profit Org.
Permit No. 795
u.s. Postage
Paid
Minneapolis, MN