

*" . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"*

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## WHAT CONSTITUTES A CULT?

*Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor*

One of the truly great problems which the Christian Church faces today is that of effectively combating false and devious teachers and their teachings, which not only bore from within the church but attack from without as well. The apostle Paul anticipated just such happenings nineteen centuries ago and urgently warned the church against it (Acts 20:28-31). Indeed, the cult situation has developed into a major problem confronting present-day Christians. In order to effectively cope with it, there is a pressing need for a back to the Bible program in all of our evangelical groups.

The field of cult activity is a continually expanding one. New movements are rising, and old ones change continually. In the realm of cults we find all shades and hues, including such who descend to the level of snake charmers and those who claim deity for their key personalities. To ignore the current situation is to manifest either naivety or lack of realism. It will be our purpose in this article to point out that there is a fundamental difference between cult teachings and their activities over against the work of the dedicated followers of Jesus Christ.

### **Definition of a Cult**

One of the shortest yet clearest definitions which I have run across is the following: "A cult is a group

which gives an excessive emphasis to some person, idea or thing." A cult may also be defined as a group which blindly and fanatically promotes a teaching which is at variance with the established positions adhered to by the Christian Church. Still another more pedantic definition claims a cult is "that group, secular or religious or both, that has deviated from what society considers normative forms of religion, economics, or politics, and has substituted a new and often unique view of the individual, his world and how this world may be obtained." In short, cultists constitute those who stand in conflict with historical Christianity on primary doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. We will proceed to list certain earmarks of cults and what constitute the identification marks.

### **What Cults Have in Common**

In the first place, all groups which fall into the category of cults exist as minorities. In other words, they represent only a fraction as compared with those who hold more of a common position regarding the fundamentals of the Christian religion. Usually all minority groups tend to be extremely vocal and articulate in order to overcome or compensate for the disadvantage of their weakness in number. All minority groups manifest a zeal and a driving force not usually char-

acteristic of the major religious bodies. Without this energetic quality none of these minority groups could maintain an effective influence in a society which is unfavorable towards them.

The second identification mark of cultists is the amazing amount of efforts on their part which is displayed in the dissemination of literature. When it comes to the effective utilization of the printed page, many of these cultists put Christians to shame by a superior method used in the distribution of literature. Obviously all their literature is slanted and hence serves as effective propaganda on their behalf. Truly cult literature is made accessible and available to people everywhere. This is achieved by an almost fanatical kind of missionary fervor. These agents of false religions travel over land and sea ever seeking to gain proselytes. Certain cults even require of their adherents that they give a prescribed length of time for the propagation of the teachings of such organizations. The Mormon cult is perhaps the most effective one in this regard.

In the third place, cultists demonstrate practically no regard for proper Bible exegesis. Verses of Scripture are wrenched out of their context without the slightest restraint, and dispensational truths are ignored altogether. When you link this procedure on their part with that of special revelation (usually claimed by cult leaders) then you have an abandonment of that which constitutes primary requisites for proper Bible study. The Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses e.g., build their doctrine of annihilation of the wicked around a few isolated passages which are ambiguous. Some of these passages are used to build up their doctrine.

If they were fair in their Scripture selection, they would take all the direct, clear, and decisive passages on such doctrine, and interpret those which are the ambiguous ones in harmony with the basic passages dealing with the subject. Cultists of our time display a Bible exegesis which is not only a demonstration of recklessness, but it actually involves an abandonment of Bible Hermeneutics.

Finally, in this connection, cultists take the advantage of the utter gullibility of millions of people in our generation who manifest an almost total lack of discernment. Invariably it is true that those who are victimized by the modern charlatans are those who manifest a glaring deficiency in knowledge as to what the Bible teaches. On the other hand, it may be said, cultists make very little headway in gaining adherents among those who are well taught and informed regarding Scriptural truth. The ignorance in the teachings of the Bible in our time is both astonishing and frightening. The gullibility on the part of millions of people allow cultists an open season every day of the year in promoting their spurious teachings. The only certain way of stemming the inroads of cultists in our day is to indoctrinate church people with the fundamental truths of the Scriptures. The Christian faith rests upon the authoritative declarations of the Word of God.

#### **Cults Seek a Status of Respectability**

One of the primary objectives of all cultists is to achieve status and respectability in the eyes of the public. At the beginning of cult activity in America (about a century ago) these few splintered or minority groups had a formidable task in overcoming the prevailing objec-

tion to their activities. That situation of the past is no longer true today. Take the Mormon cult, e.g., which a century ago was not tolerated in a single central state, may now operate freely in all of the same states. At that time, the only way open to the Mormons was to start their long trek to Utah. In our time Mormons have been able to shake off the prejudice prevalent against them, and scores of them hold high position in our national life. Several are college presidents, another one held a recent cabinet post; still another one is regarded today as presidential timber. The trend is to give respectability to the cultists. Dr. Charles Braden wrote a book on cults some years ago, entitled, *These Also Believe*. Somehow he has, possibly inadvertently, helped to remove the stigma associated with the cult movement. Not long ago one of the great Bible teachers in America unilaterally decided to extend the hand of fellowship to the members of one of our major cults in America. This decision by a nationally known Bible teacher served as a windfall to the Adventist movement. This group has worked incessantly since the turn of the century in achieving respectability. The group known as "The Camps Farthest Out" also has achieved a status among many local churches and ministers in America. In the past a lack of status or respectability has been a formidable barrier for the spurious bodies. In our day of compromise, when the ecumenical movement has reached a high tide, it is obvious that less and less opposition will be directed against cult activity. The fact remains, however, that these spurious bodies are identified in Scripture as false systems bearing the ear-mark of demon teachings (1 Tim. 4:1).

From the beginning of Church History up to the present day, Christianity had to defend itself against attacks from anti-Christian foes. Unquestionably the most dangerous of these foes are the ones which pretend to be friends of Christianity and yet retain elements which are irreconcilable to the Christian faith. Satan is never more dangerous than when he disguises himself in the cloak of an angel of light. Unfortunately in our time the spirit of broad-mindedness has been so widely advocated that there is no national spirit remaining which is adequate to take up the struggle against the cults now prevalent. Our magazine, *The Discerner*, and our depot of literature continue to lay bare the Christ-denying doctrines of cultists. With regard to the deity of the Lord and truths pertaining to redemption, none of the present-day cults has taken a Biblical view. It is our God-given duty and responsibility to continually point out where these deviations occur. This is the Scriptural way. Every one of the New Testament writers warns us against false teachers and for us to disassociate ourselves from them (2 John 2:10). Jude strikes a bold note in his words, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." This issue of *The Discerner* will help, we trust, to see the significance of our struggle against present-day cultists. This is a responsibility which we all should assume, and no efforts should be spared in providing help to all those who struggle against the teachings of cultists. They are deceptive yet often sugar-coated to mislead naive or uninformed people.

## CULTIST ACTIVITY IN THE LAST DAYS

*By Rev. George Darby*

*Pastor Calvary Memorial Church, Navarre, Minnesota*

"Twenty-two chapels will be built by the Mormons in New England during the next three years at a cost of two million dollars. Last year, as part of their world-wide construction effort Mormons put up 411 chapels."

"Seventh Day Adventism had more missionaries on the foreign field in 1960 than any denominational or faith mission board."

"Two million copies of the New World Translation of the Bible have been printed and sent around the world by Jehovah's Witnesses."

Items like the foregoing which appear regularly in our newspapers and religious periodicals serve to focus our attention upon the activity of the cults in our time. They also lead us to ask the question: Is this activity a sign of the last days and does it indicate a near return of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Our Lord indicated two religious phenomena that would characterize the days just before His coming. In Luke 18, verse 8 He asked the question, "When the Son of man cometh shall He find the faith on the earth?" The implication of that question surely is that a wide-spread departure from the faith once delivered to the saints would be one of the signs of the end of the age. In Matthew 24, verse 11, the Lord Jesus, speaking of the signs that would herald His return, said, "Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many." Thus He predicted that the presence in increasing numbers of false religious teachers would be one of the signs of His coming. These two signs of apostasy from the faith and deception by false doctrine are not just

coincidental. They are vitally and logically related the one to the other. Paul shows this relationship when, speaking by the Spirit in I Timothy 4, verse 1, he says that "in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons." It is apostasy from the faith and the failure to maintain its essential doctrines which paves the way for the progress of false teaching. Departure from divinely delivered doctrine opens the door for the entrance of demonic doctrine. When men fail to stand fast in the faith they soon succumb to the pressure of evil teaching and are swept away by the current of some false religious system.

It is surely not without significance that almost all of the false cults we face today have made their appearance upon the religious scene within the last 100 years or less. It is within that same period of time that the church has witnessed the most concerted and persistent attack in its history upon the distinctive doctrines of the Christian faith. While men have been taught to doubt and even to deny the credibility and authority of the Word of God on the one hand, they have on the other hand become ready victims to false and soul-destroying teachings. Without the Word of God as an objective and infallible standard of truth, they have been conditioned to receive all manner of specious and spurious doctrines.

As one examines the nature and activity of present day cults, there are certain features apparent which seem to suggest a kind of kinship

among these false systems in spite of their differences at some points. These features common to them all indicate in turn a common parentage and a common purpose back of each one.

Paul, in the Scripture already referred to, I Timothy 4:1, reveals the origin and inspiration of these false teachings when he describes them as doctrines of demons. He also says that these doctrines are propagated by seducing spirits. One of the elements of the great tribulation, according to Revelation 9, verses 1 through 11, will be the letting loose upon men of hordes of demon powers. It is undoubtedly true that now in our day such agencies are at work in human experience prompting and promoting false religious doctrine. Such supernatural motivation could well explain at least in part the extraordinary zeal and energy shown by the advocates of false doctrine in our day. We hear much about the remarkable progress being made by the cults. Actually their numerical growth has not been quite as remarkable as some reports would indicate. It cannot be denied, however, that in point of zeal, enthusiasm and aggressive propagation of their tenets, the cults are remarkably progressive.

Jehovah's witnesses are indefatigable in their personal missionary work, as are also the Mormons. Millions of pieces of literature are published and circulated each year by Unity School of Christianity. In all the major cities of the world Christian Science maintains book rooms and reading rooms, and they are open to the public at all times. Seventh Day Adventism conducts world-wide correspondence Bible studies and maintains expensive radio broadcasts. Since this display

of zeal in promoting the cause of error cannot possibly be attributed to Him Who is the Spirit of Truth, it seems reasonable to suppose that the proponents of error and religious falsehood are supported and sustained in their endeavours by another spirit.

The marks of demonic activity are not as apparent in all the cults as they are for example in Spiritism. Nevertheless, when the chief thrust of their teachings is examined, it will be found to involve a direct and satanic attack upon the Truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. In the first three verses of the fourth chapter of John's first epistle the writer makes clear what is the acid test of truth or falsehood. He says that "every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (or that Jesus man is the Christ, come in the flesh) is not of God." The Person of Christ is the final citadel against which the attack of the Devil is launched in our day. John says that this is the very spirit of anti-christ, and it prepares the way for the man of sin, Satan's substitute for the Son of God. Every one of the cults, if tested at this point, will be found defective in its view, either of the Person or the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Seventh Day Adventism compromises the Truth of His sinless, divine nature by saying that Christ had a tendency to sin. Romanism admits His deity but dishonors His atoning sacrifice by joining Mary to Him as a co-redemptrix. Christian Science makes Him an unreal and transitory embodiment of an idea. To the Jehovah's Witness He was only a man possessed for a little while by the Christ Spirit. So we might go on to show that all the cults, differing as they do from one another at some point or points,

are animated by that Satanic spirit which would deny to Jesus Christ His full deity as the Son of God and His glory as the solitary Redeemer of men. In the 17th and 18th chapters of the book of the Revelation we have the inspired description of Babylon, the final form of religious apostasy and unbelief. There in chapter 18, verse 2, John, the seer, tells us that it will become the habitation of demons and the hold of every foul spirit and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. This is what we see developing about us today by the multiplication of false cults within the sphere of professing Christendom.

As the end of the age draws near we may expect to see a more and more subtle approach employed by Satan as he seeks to produce a counterfeit faith. Paul says in II Timothy chapter 3, verse 13, "Evil men and seducers (or imposters) shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." It is this feature of deception and man's increasing susceptibility to be deceived which contributes to the progress of false cults. In II Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 11, the apostle writes of "the strong delusion which God will send upon an unbelieving world, that they should believe the lie."

The symptoms of spiritual delusion are about us on every hand today and sometimes appear in the most unexpected places. It is surely a cause for concern, if not for alarm, when some of our evangelical leaders express themselves in eulogistic terms with reference to the late Pope John XXIII. Can it be that we fail to discern behind this "Man of Peace" the master strategist, Satan, who would use the human instrument to draw all men into one false world church?

Many people become followers of

false cults and false religions today because there is something in these systems that seems to answer the needs and hungers of the human heart. This is the pattern of deceit. Men are weary of war, so Rome's proposals of world peace fall like music on their ears. The promise is deliberately designed to conceal Rome's ambitions for totalitarian rule, both temporal and spiritual.

Injustice and oppression cry out for judgment, so Jehovah's Witnesses paint a glowing picture of the kingdom where righteousness and fair treatment for all will prevail. Conveniently they leave out of the picture the dark shadow of personal sin which forever bars men from the blessings of the kingdom.

People instinctively want to be healthy, so Christian Science claims to exercise a healing ministry. What it refuses to discuss is the undeniable fact of sickness and death among its devotees, including Mary Baker Eddy herself. Moreover, it makes no provision for the healing of the soul, since it rejects the atoning blood of Christ.

Man aspires to a noble destiny, so Mormonism teaches him that he is a god in embryo. It neglects to mention that although made in the image and likeness of God, man is so defaced and defiled by sin that apart from redemption and regeneration he must forever come short of the glory of God.

Spiritism is aware of the loneliness of the bereaved heart, so it offers the consolation of communication with the beloved dead. Not advertised by its advocates are the terrible effects suffered by many who have sought contact with the spirit world. Robert Brown in a book, *Demonology and Witchcraft*, page 294, claims that a leading medical organ asserted that of the 24,000

cases of insanity in America in 1873, no less than 7,500 of them were believed to be directly attributable to spiritualism.

Many unsaved men and women have high standards of personal conduct. Seventh Day Adventism appeals to such by taking a firm stand against the use of alcohol, tobacco and other intoxicants. Subtly it insinuates the doctrine of salvation in part at least by works. Thus by a way that seemeth right unto a man, it leads its followers into a path of departure from Scriptural teaching and in some cases to ultimate spiritual death.

In John's first epistle, chapter 4, verse 5, we read concerning false teachers, "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." It is this method which the cultists of our day employ in their approach to men. They address themselves to those needs and desires in the human heart which the natural man is capable of understanding and appreciating. Thus they gain the ear of multitudes who otherwise would have no interest in what men call vaguely "religion."

The church, indwelt by the Holy Spirit constitutes the one great bulwark against the false teachings of our day. When the church is removed at the rapture, the spirit of error will gain virtually undisputed sway over the minds of those who have received not the love of the Truth that they might be saved. This is described for us in the second chapter of II Thessalonians and culminates in the manifestation of the man of sin. The book of the Revela-

tion depicts to us some of the horrible consequences that will entail from the judicial blindness which God will then pronounce upon an unbelieving world.

"Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies.

He who hates Truth must be the dupe of lies.

And he who will be cheated to the last,

Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast."

The attitude of the believer toward the situation we have thus described is surely not difficult to determine. It is summarized for us in Paul's word in I Corinthians 16, verse 13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." There must be unremitting watchfulness against the intrusion of error into the teaching of the Word of God. Alertness and awareness to the subtlety of Satan's attacks upon vital Truths of the faith must characterize the Christian teacher and preacher. Unscriptural teachings must be exposed and attacked without apology. Compromise with error or unbelief in any shape or form must be steadfastly shunned. On the positive side truth of the Word of God must be proclaimed with increasing vigour and boldness. Whatever men may think of the Bible and its message, we know it to be divinely authoritative, and the only means whereby men and women can be brought to the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hold fast to the form of sound words and hold forth the Word of Life to a dying world.

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## MAN'S CULTS AND GOD'S GOSPEL TWO TESTS TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THEM

By Oliver W. Price, Th.M.

*Is it necessary to study deeply into the teachings of the many false cults that are abroad today, in order to be able to answer them and not be deceived? Mr. Price thinks not and shows in this article how any intelligent believer, with the aid of certain Bible passages, can expose false systems. He names two basic doctrines of the faith by which they can be measured. As many Times readers now know, Mr. Price is the Oklahoma director of the Bible Lovers League.*

A neatly dressed lady got out of her car and came to our door. We lived about five miles from town and she was the only person who ever came that far with religious literature.

"We are distributing this message to every home in the United States and we would like to give you a copy," she began. At a glance I saw that the literature was from Jehovah's Witnesses, the most persistent door-to-door religious workers in the United States.

Knowing the dishonor they do to the person of Christ, I bluntly replied, "No, thank you, I do not want the literature!" Seeing that I was not in a mood to discuss the matter she departed.

"Why didn't you talk to her?" my wife inquired. "You were probably better qualified to show her the truth than anyone else she will ever meet." I had never thought of it that way. Since then I have had an opportunity to set several of them thinking.

A number of false doctrines are being circulated through literature and visitation. The Mormons have a very active visitation program. The Seventh Day Adventists use this method of disseminating their teachings. The Roman Catholics are canvassing some communities, too. In San Diego, Calif., they reported 90,000 visits. In Oklahoma they staged "Operation Understanding,"

in which they visited thousands of homes over the state, inviting everyone to visit their churches for open house.

How are people going to prepare themselves for such a variety of attacks on the true faith? Who can keep posted on all of the false doctrines abroad today?

### Not All Have This Opportunity

Everyone cannot resort to the expedient that one lady adopted. My phone rang and the voice at the other end of the line said, "What was that verse you used Sunday night to show that Christ is God?" "Hebrews 1:8 must be the text you wanted," I replied. "It says, 'But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'" "Thank you," the inquirer replied and hung up.

Soon the phone rang again, "What is another verse proving the deity of Christ?" the same voice asked. "John 20:28 makes it very clear. Thomas spoke to Jesus and said, 'My Lord and my God.'" By this time my curiosity was aroused. "Are you talking to a Jehovah's Witness," I asked, "and calling me for the texts?" "Yes, I am," she answered and hung up again.

The next phone call led to Acts 1:8 which emphasizes the commission to be witnesses for the Lord Jesus. They claim to be witnesses for Jehovah, why not for Jesus?

Later I talked with the lady who had called. The Jehovah's Witness had left her home with the remark, "I came to convince you but I am afraid that you have almost persuaded me." This deluded servant of a false cult may never have another witness that clear. Very few false religionists would wait, however, while you call for information or thumb through a book looking for an answer.

You can be prepared to answer every cult if you have a clear grasp of your own faith. You need not know the error. Just be ready to measure every "gospel" by the true standard of Scripture. Of course, it would be valuable to know the whole course of Bible truth, but most Christians are not that well prepared.

#### **Two Lines of Revealing Truth**

This article will briefly outline two lines of truth that will reveal the error of nearly every false system of religion. Master the teaching of Scripture on these two points and you will have in hand a ready rule by which you may test every cult that comes your way. First, know the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, grasp the essence of the Gospel.

I am not saying that everyone who gives a good confession on these two points can be trusted as a true servant of the Lord. However, all false teaching is apt to be in error on one or both of these issues.

I have already mentioned two important texts on the deity of Christ (Heb. 1:8; John 20:28). A number of cults deny this essential truth; but they frequently give deceptive answers when questioned. Some will admit that He is God, "but so are we all." He was a son of God, "just as all men are." This is an evasion

and a subtle denial of the honor due Christ. Keep in mind that He is the "only begotten Son" (John 1:14; 3:16). Adam was a son of God by creation (Luke 3:38). We are sons of God by redemption (John 1:12, 13). Only Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation. His sonship had no beginning or ending. He is equal with the Father and the Spirit, being linked with them in the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:18-20). He accepted worship (John 9:38), and every knee will bow to Him (Phil. 2:10). He is God; we are not. Paul and the angels refused worship because that is reserved for God alone (Acts 14:12-18; Rev. 19:10).

Now we come to the second matter, the essence of the Gospel. There are those who admit the deity of Christ who fall short when measured by the true Gospel; Roman Catholicism, for example. There are only two religions in the world, the true and the false. The true faith says we are saved by that which Christ has done for us. All false religion, including false forms of Christianity, hold that we are saved by what we do for God.

You may use this test as I did. Visiting the library recently I found a magazine I had never seen before. Scanning its pages I noted an emphasis on the second coming of Christ and some other questions. I found nothing wrong with this, but I wanted a decisive declaration concerning the saving grace of God. Soon I found listed an article on "What Must I Do To Be Saved?" I turned quickly to this subject for the key to the magazine's position. Quoting Acts 16:31 it said that many believe you are saved simply by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, but actually this verse meant the acceptance of and obedience to

all of Jesus' teachings. So the writer reasoned that our salvation is based on keeping the commandments and precepts taught by our Lord. This makes Him a prophet but not a Saviour. This slights His death. Why did He die for guilty sinners?

Another paper came to my home for a while. One issue carried an article on "The Mark of a Christian" and, quoting the Old Testament, made the keeping of the Sabbath the mark by which we may identify a true child of God. All false religion plays a variation on one theme: salvation by your works. Some add works to faith, but all make our own achievements the basis for our final acceptance with God. True salvation is "obtained" not "attained" (1 Thess. 5:9).

#### **How To Tell Where a Man Stands**

When you want to know where a man stands the best question to ask is this, "What are you counting on to get to Heaven?" When you look at religious literature seek the answer to this decisive question. One of the old hymns of the church is thoroughly Scriptural when it says:

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;

I dare not trust the sweetest  
frame,

But wholly lean on Jesus' name.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I  
stand;

All other ground is sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer used to say: "The Gospel is good news to be believed, not good advice to be followed. When you preach, if you do not give the people something to be believed you have not preached the Gospel."

In 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 we have

a key passage that summarizes the Gospel. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Note the emphasis on what Christ did for us, and there is not one phrase about what we do for Him. The two verses before this text make it clear that this is the Gospel that Paul preached, "which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved." Plainly we have here the Gospel by which men are saved and it is the good news of what Christ accomplished for us.

A Gospel that depends on man's effort is like the healing waters mentioned in John 5. The guilty sinner is too weak to avail himself of it (Rom. 5:6).

To come to the heart of the matter, false religions and cults are unanimous in their ignorance of "the gift of righteousness" (Rom. 5:17). They know nothing of the obedience of one man which makes many righteous (Rom. 5:19). They insist on one's own obedience as the ground of righteousness.

Never forget that in the same manner in which God laid the sin of the world on Christ at the cross, He also clothes the believer with the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness became ours even as our sins became His. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Bible warns against casting your pearls before swine. It is not safe to engage in prolonged discussions with false cultists. They will plant doubts in your mind that may

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## "DIVINELY DOGMATIC"

C. Victor Nyquist, Pastor, Park Avenue Covenant Church

The word "dogmatic," or "dogmatism," has almost become a "bad" word in religious circles. It has come to carry the connotation of being bigoted, arrogant, dictatorial, or opinionated. And yet in its original meaning it was rather profound. It comes from the Greek word "dogma," from "dokein," meaning "to think, to seem, to seem good." It designates a tenet of doctrine stated with authority. *It implies the positive presentation of Divine truth!*

It is almost strange how we insist on being dogmatic in every field of thought and endeavor except in the things of religion. A doctor, a druggist, or a laboratory technician that did not stick dogmatically to proper prescriptions and rules pertaining to their professions would soon be out of a clientele. A teacher of English that refused to follow the prescribed rules of grammar would soon be out of a contract. An architect or a builder that grew careless in the matter of measurements would soon go into bankruptcy. A store keeper lacking a proper yardstick or a proper scale would soon have to close shop. We have just witnessed another stirring drama in the skies, an astronaut orbiting the earth twenty-two times. We are deeply thankful that all the engineers and space scientists in charge were dogmatic in making arrangements, checking, and maneuvering.

Horatius Bonar wrote almost a century ago: "The religion of the day is an *easy-minded religion*, without conflict and without wrestling, without self-denial and sacrifice—a religion which knows nothing of the

pangs of the New Birth at its commencement, and nothing of the desperate struggle with the devil day by day, making us long for resurrection deliverance, for the binding of the adversary and the Lord's Return. It is a *second-rate religion*—a religion in which there is no largeness, no grandeur, no potency, no noble-mindedness, and no constraining love. It is a hollow religion, with a fair exterior, but an aching heart. It is a *feeble religion*, lacking the sinews and bones of hardier times, very different from the indomitable, much-enduring, storm-braving religion, not merely of apostolic days, but even the Reformation. It is an *uncertain religion*; that is to say, *it is not rooted in certainty!*"

We have become overly tolerant and magnanimous of spirit. We have contracted a strange color-blindness, incapable of discerning what is true and what is false. Cleverness, eloquence, and even a touch of earnestness, are considered acceptable norms in most of our pulpits. Everybody is thought to be right, and nobody is thought to be wrong. We have a morbid dread for all controversy, and a fanatical fear for distinctiveness. Disputed points in doctrine are discarded as being rubbish. In the words of Vance Havner, we "glory in being fundamental-modernists and modern-fundamentalists, disciples of the Lowest Common Denominator!" We run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. The condition is one of spinelessness, bonelessness, nervelessness, and jelly-fishiness that must be horribly nauseating to our Lord. Campbell Morgan used to say,

"Lukewarmness is the worst kind of blasphemy." Of old the prophet said "Here am I!"; today the prophet asks, "Where am I?"

How free dare we to be? How lacking in dogmatism can we afford to be? Isaiah said of old, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (8:20). Our Lord met the attack of the Devil with the ringing note of finality: "It is written!" The apostle Paul states unequivocally, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). The apostle John reminds us that to reject the testimony concerning the Son of God is to make God into a "liar" (1 John 5:10), and that to give heresy in any form our blessing is to be a partaker in the evil deed (2 John v. 10,11).

In the words of Bishop J. C. Ryle: "It was *dogma* in the apostolic days

which emptied the heathen temples and shook Greece and Rome. It was *dogma* which awoke Christendom from its slumbers at the time of the Reformation and spoiled the Pope of one third of his members. It was *dogma* which 100 years ago revived the Church of England in the days of Whitefield, Wesley, Venn, and Romaine, and blew up our dying Christianity into a burning flame. It is *dogma* at this moment which gives power to every successful mission, whether home or abroad. It is doctrine—doctrine, clear, ringing doctrine—which, like the ram's horns of Jericho, casts down the opposition of the devil and sin."

This does not gainsay the fact that we must hold and speak the truth in "love" (Eph. 4:15). This is no place for a club-wielding, heartless, and feelingless ministry. Our Lord dealt firmly with the "rich young ruler," but it also says, "Jesus beholding him loved him!" (Mark 10:21)

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#### MAN'S CULTS AND GOD'S GOSPEL (Continued from page 11)

require skilled help to overcome. We need not feel obligated to talk to one who is determined to reject the truth until we have convinced him. We should, however, be prepared to give a pointed witness, watching especially for the occasional cultist who may be open to the

truth. If you jot these texts and the gist of this article on a card and commit it to memory you will have a ready testimony awaiting the next cultist who knocks at your door.

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLA.

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#### LISTINGS TAKEN FROM OUR CATALOG

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(Continued on page 15)

## ACADEMIC FREEDOM

*Rev. Harold J. Berry*

In October of 1962, Dr. Ralph Elliott was dismissed from his position as the chairman of the Old Testament Department in Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Southern Baptist Seminary released Dr. Elliott because of his refusal to withdraw one of his books from a second printing. The book, entitled *The Message of Genesis*, presents the creation account as symbolic rather than as historical fact.

The seminary has undergone considerable external and internal attack because of the "restraint" it has placed on its professors. This situation has again given rise to the unsolved but much disputed issue of "Academic Freedom." To what extent is a professor to be given open license in teaching contrary to the accepted position of his institution? Should a professor be allowed to instruct without restrictions?

The seminary has doubtlessly experienced opposition from those who do not realize the dangers involved in departing from the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. This method accepts the actual meaning of the words in a sentence to be basic in discovering the correct interpretation. On the other hand, the allegorical method of interpretation believes the true meaning of a passage is hidden beneath the actual meaning of the words and may not be in any way related to the customary usage of the words involved.

If words mean little or nothing, then we have no standards for a correct interpretation of God's Word and each person is cast on the limitless sea of his own uncertainty. Some

have allegorized the reality of sin and would have us to believe that education or a better environment is the answer to man's "weakness."

The principle of academic freedom is also violated by some professors in state universities. They, too, have occasionally set themselves apart from any restraint that might be placed upon them by their institutions. Commenting on the right of a university to restrict its professors who might teach atheism or bring obscenity into the classroom, the governor of Florida said recently, "The people have a right to restrict the governor—they do so. They have right to restrict the courts—I think—historically they have done so. . . . And, therefore, I don't want to see us get ourselves in a situation where we set one group aside and say, 'But you are a law unto yourselves.' I don't think it is enough to say, 'Well, we are gentlemen and we are patriots and we are intellectuals, and therefore, we do not need to be restrained at all.'"

This same principle applies to the teaching of Christianity. It does not appear ethical for a man to teach in an institution and yet put forth doctrines that strike at the very foundation upon which the institution is constructed. As an individual, he is entitled to think as he desires, but as a member of a group there are limitations as to what views he expresses. There is no valid complaint if a person is not permitted to propagate his ideas in an institution with which he is not in agreement. A man need not be forced to compromise his position—but he may have to choose another school

in which he can set forth his teaching.

It is our responsibility as children of God to determine the truth of God's Word and then take a firm stand against error. We can expect opposition if we do so. Christ ran across the grain of the religious thinking of His day by driving the money changers from the temple (John 2:13-16). He did not permit their evil practices even though it was possible that some of them were sincere. Paul, speaking by inspiration, stated that there is no room in Christian circles for the approved propagation of erroneous doctrines (Gal. 1:6-9).

Our present situation is also somewhat accounted for as a result of thinking that truth is relative rather than absolute. Those who do not accept God's Word as the final authority, find it difficult to exclude others who teach contrary to the historical interpretation of the Scriptures.

It is not our prerogative to change the standards—we are dealing with fixed truth, and those who deviate from it cannot be excused on the basis of a false sense of academic freedom.

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#### CATALOG LISTINGS (Continued from page 13)

2. GOD'S TRUTH VERSUS MAN'S THEORIES, by J. H. Gauss. Bible deliverance from Satan's deceits, including Catholicism, Judaism, Unitarianism, Universalism, Christian Science, Divine Science, J.W.'s, S.D.A., Pentecostalism, Latter Day Saints (Morm.), Spiritualism, Swedenborgianism (New Jerusalem Church), Theosophy, New Thought, and Unity. 314 pages, \$2.50.
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## PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*By Pastor "Mac" McIlroy of Spiritual Clinic (Radio), and  
Pastor of Powderhorn Park Baptist Church of Minneapolis.*

QUESTION . . . *Is it right to say that all the cults of man have a sense of self-sufficiency and independence of God?*

ANSWER . . . . Yes, I believe it is right. The controversy between Satan-ruled man and God is one of method. It is one of self-righteousness and character building, or one of bestowed righteousness and character by the fruit of the Spirit (See Romans 14:17 and 15:13). Will a man try to save himself, OR humbly submit to being saved by Another? (Titus 3:3-7). Will he try to conform himself to what little he knows to be good and true, OR will he be transformed by the power of God into that which is no less than the image of Christ? (2 Cor. 3:17,18). Will he present the sacrifice of a sincere effort to be moral and religious, OR accept the God-provided sacrifice for all sin in the shed blood of Christ? (1 Cor. 1:18-31). Will he try to establish himself before God on the ground of his own works, OR rest in the finished work of Christ for him? (Romans 4:2-8). Will he try to improve his fallen nature, OR partake of the Divine nature and become a son of God by the power of God, through faith in Christ Jesus? (2 Peter 1:2-4; John 1:12,13).

I am sure that it is plain for you to see that one method depends wholly upon self for its realization, promises glory to man alone, and has its origin when Satan proposed to be like the Most High and made his subtle proposal to Eve, "Ye shall be as gods" (Isa. 14:12-15; Gen. 3:5). The other method is dependent upon God alone, and, therefore, demands an attitude of faith toward Him for its realization, and issues in glory to the blessed Lord, Who alone is worthy to be praised (Revelation 5:1-12).