

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

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Rev. David L. Larsen, whose article is featured in this Issue, is a new writer for us, and was recently elected to our board. He is pastor of the Elim Covenant Church of Minneapolis. His penetrating presentation of his subject will be welcome to our readers as well as the other articles.

THE TRAGIC ERRORS OF PRESENT-DAY CULTISTS

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

This is a time when ecumenicalism, church unions and excessive compromises, are promoted by major denominations and religious leaders in all areas of the world. In view of this trend it is obvious that present-day churchianity is also weakening in its attitude towards cultists. The spirit of our day is one which seeks an ever greater degree of unification of all elements within the sphere of Christendom. One of the well known writers on modern cult movements, Dr. Charles Braden, entitles his book on the subject, *These Also Believe*. While this book offers much valuable information on these spurious groups, the author seeks, nevertheless, to tone down his discussion relative to the unBiblical elements propagated by the cult groups which he treats. In fact, they are given a considerable amount of respectability. Somehow, he has possibly inadvertently helped to remove much of the stigma associated with cult movements.

Present-day believers seem inclined more and more to soften their criticism of the activities of these spurious groups. We remember a few years ago the well known Bible teacher, Dr. Donald Grey

Barnhouse, and his research expert, or staff writer, Walter R. Martin, gave respectability to the Adventist movement by extending the hand of fellowship to this group. This may have been a well-meaning step by these writers, but it was unfortunate that such an accommodation was made. Their statements were so significant that the *Time* magazine took note of them. In my wide travels across America, and elsewhere, I have found a trend of registering less and less opposition to the activities of cultists. Leaders of the Movement, *Camps Farthest Out*, have been invited to conduct services in well known conservative churches. This present trend is an alarming one, and the results will be that more people than ever before will be victimized by these quacks and charlatans.

The two articles in this Issue of *The Discerner*, following mine, are featuring some of the most dangerous aspects of cult activities. They should be read and re-read in view of the slippery road on which the present-day cultists have embarked.

In my preliminary discussion, I wish to point out a few of the chief errors of cultists, yes, errors, which are common to most of the groups

which are currently active. Since these errors involve fundamental matters, it is imperative that we see them in their right context. My discussion will cover some of the primary errors of the leading cults of our time.

Claims of Ongoing Revelation and Special Inspiration

The true Christian Church has properly maintained throughout Church History that the 66 canonical books of our Bible constitute the finality of the divine written revelation. In fact, the last book of the Bible gives a solemn warning against any attempt at tampering with the final record: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18,19). This holds true for the whole Bible, for Paul writes: "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16). Founders of spurious systems as e.g., Joseph Smith and Ellen G. White make the matter of special revelation or inspiration an integral part of their systems. Such assertions are dangerous, and any cult leader who has the audacity to make such claims must be branded as false. Joseph Smith had no hesitancy whatsoever in committing himself in the matter of ongoing revelation. Ellen G. White was somewhat more cautious, but her statements as well as those made in her behalf by loyal supporters, allow for special inspiration and illumination. By twisting and circumventing the Scriptures, the leaders of the Jehovah's Witnesses have brought forth teachings, which they

claim are authoritative. The Jehovah's Witnesses have developed the role of the infallible interpreters of the Bible. Pastor Russell, Judge Rutherford and Nathan H. Knorr all pose as infallible interpreters of the Bible. Bible believing Christians recognize the Word of God as the only absolute authority and rule for faith and practice. This was the position of the early Church, and Reformation theology accepted the Scriptures as the only infallible authority. The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, allows equal authority for tradition, papal pronouncements, and Scripture. In this regard, the Roman church must be classified with the spurious bodies of our time. Herbert Armstrong, one of the most dangerous teachers of our day, has the audacity to claim a singular insight regarding truth, and that all others prior to him were defective in the presentation of the Biblical message. (See *Plain Truth*, February 1958). It must be clearly stated that any cult leader who claims total uniqueness with respect to inspiration and illumination must be identified as being spurious.

Cultists Are Defective in Bible Exegesis

With the Protestant Reformation a remarkable progress was made in restoring to the Church sound principles of Bible exegesis. In other words, it was a back to the Bible movement. The allegorical method of interpretation, which had prevailed throughout the medieval period, was abandoned by Luther for the direct and literal principle in the interpretation of the Scriptures. This involved a strict adherence to the structure of the passage grammatically, the context, and the historical setting. These steps are fundamental in the understanding

of the Scriptures. In my long study of the methods used by cultists, I find among them very little concern in finding the literal meaning of passages. Rather, verses are selected in a helter and skelter manner to bolster the preconceived ideas of these innovators of Scriptural truth. The lofty dispensational purposes of God are passed over without any restraint. Many of the present-day cults incorporate the legalistic pattern which had significance in the dispensation of law, involving the children of Israel. Somehow they fail entirely to recognize that Christ has fulfilled the law in its entirety, and that these restrictions which were valid under the law economy, must not be incorporated during the dispensation of grace. On this matter Paul writes, "A man is not justified by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16). In Chapter 3 of the same Epistle, the apostle writes, "Wherefore the law was a school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith. But that after faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master" (Gal. 3:34,35). The whole Epistle to the Galatians sets forth conclusively that the legalistic system has no validity in the Christian life. Roman Catholicism, Seventh Day Adventism, British Israelism, and several other bodies are deeply involved in legalistic practices. Sabbath Keeping, or other legalistic restrictions are held up to be not only meritorious but necessary to salvation. The Herbert Armstrong system manifests contempt for the promise of salvation by receiving Christ as personal Saviour. (See March Issue of *Plain Truth*, July 1957.) Armstrong's program is a fusion of grace and law.

Both the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists build their doctrine of annihilation of the

wicked around a few passages of the Old Testament which are somewhat obscure. Passages which are clear and decisive regarding that subject in the New Testament are totally ignored by them in dealing with the wicked dead. Proper exegeses demand that Scripture be interpreted with Scripture. All the great doctrines of the Church may be fully validated and established by following such a plan of Scripture study. Cultists insist on selecting isolated passages without any regard to context or dispensational matters, and hence using such verses mainly to support their ramshackle systems. Cultists also take advantage of the utter gullibility of many people in our generation in getting across this kind of faulty exegesis. People who are ignorant as to what the Bible teaches are easily swept into these spurious systems through the work of these clever manipulators of the Scriptures.

Cultists at Variance With Stream of History

It should be known that the cults active in our time have a relatively recent origin. Even the oldest among them do not go back more than a century and a quarter. Church History goes back nearly two millenniums. Cultists have this in common, namely that of making extraordinary claims for their respective systems. These claims demonstrate that they are out of step with Church History. Herbert W. Armstrong perhaps makes the most unsubstantiated attack on Christianity. Listen to him. "What is the one and only Gospel of Jesus Christ? The world does not know. It has not been preached for 18½ centuries, strange as that may seem" (*Plain Truth*, March '62, p. 9). He brands all others as erroneous, spurious and false. This is an unwarranted attack

on historic Christianity. The Jehovah's Witnesses are even less restrained in their open attacks on ministers and church organizations. Nothing is more characteristic of the Jehovah's Witnesses than their unmitigated attacks directed against historic Christian denominations. They especially pour out their venom upon the preachers of the Gospel. Contrary to all this, Church History reveals a remarkable continuity of belief in the cardinal points of the historic creed including the internationally recognized declaration known as the *Apostle's Creed*, which goes back to the 2nd century. What the original apostles believed and taught were set forth by the Apostolic Fathers and the renowned Church Fathers. Leaders in the Reformation period, and during the post-Reformation generations, also continued to emphasize the great essentials of the Scriptures. Bible-believing Christians today still uphold the old cardinal doctrines. Belief in the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, His Vicarious Atonement, Salvation through Christ alone, and the Authority of the Scriptures, have been consistently maintained throughout the centuries. Yet, in the light of all this, cultists challenge the validity of historical truth which takes us back to the 1st century. About a century ago the Adventist movement challenged the rightness of the churches in observing the Lord's Day or the 1st day of the week for worship. Their spokesmen have asserted that the Roman Church with its papacy changed the day from the 7th to the 1st. Somehow, these leaders usually hesitate to identify a particular pope who made this far-reaching change in the day of worship. The historical record stemming from the earliest centuries testify unmistakably that the

1st day of the week was the one recognized for worship. Therefore, the Adventists are out of step with the entire historical practices of the Christian Church. Moreover, they are crawling back to legalism and the keeping of the O. T. Sabbath. This was a particular sign for the Hebrew people in their covenant relationship with God under the law economy. I might go on further and point out that other cults are equally guilty of deviating from the faith and practices of historic Christianity in other matters. These newcomers, relatively speaking, have the audacity to ask people to abandon the old spiritual landmarks and accept the new interpretations which are concocted by minds which are excessively prejudiced.

I can conceive of no greater error than that of a detachment from the faith and practices of God's people which go back to New Testament times. Truly, these new-fangled systems are completely out of step with historic Christianity, that is, the whole stream of Church History. Let me urge you readers not to listen to these new voices who claim a kind of infallibility for their teachings. It is sheer folly on their part in detaching themselves from long established beliefs which have brought to countless millions salvation and genuine satisfaction. Obviously there are kernels of truth in all of the cult systems extant. But the deviation of cultists from foundational truths compels us to identify these promoters as blind leaders of the blind. The zeal and zest with which they carry on their activities must not confuse us so that we become sympathetic to their program. Truly cultists err greatly for they do not understand the Scriptures nor the power of God. (Mark 12:24)

FALSE ASCETICISM IN THE LATTER TIMES

A Study in I Timothy 4:1-5

David L. Larsen

Great interest attaches to every detail of Paul's classic analysis of the great spiritual apostasy in the latter times as set forth in I Timothy 4:1-5. The rise of heresy and the intensification of the Satanic perversion of Christian truth in the latter times are everywhere anticipated in the Scripture. What we see in our own day should really be no shock or surprise to the student of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit explicitly describes this departure from the faith during the latter times in the prophetic word in such passages as the one now before us.

The first stage in apostasy is to stand away from that body of truth spoken of in the New Testament as "the faith" (Acts 6:7, 13:8, Gal. 1:23, 3:23, Phil. 1:27, etc.). The ultimate cause of such error is seen to be the work of deceiving evil spirits who use human agencies for the spread of their doctrines. The denial of the faith is clearly the goal and work of Satan. He seeks to subvert individuals (I Tim. 1:19), but also seeks to shape whole movements and waves of false teaching.

But what is first theological error soon involves moral lapse. Those who propagate false doctrine must do violence to the revealed truth of God. False teachers wrest the Scriptures. They defy the work of the illuminating Holy Spirit. They speak lies and do not the truth. This involves them in either hypocritical play-acting or else they become so calloused and insensitive to the truth that they are as Paul describes them, "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron." The conscience becomes progressively cauterized and more and more

unresponsive to the correction of the God-breathed Book (II Tim. 3:16). What begins then as theological deviation soon becomes the radical distortion of honesty and good judgment. It is dangerous to trifle with the truth of God and disastrous to depart from it.

The third stage in apostasy we may speak of as practical imbalance. One of the prime marks of apostasy is a false and spurious asceticism. As Paul puts it, "Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats." Apostasy involves one in departure from the fundamentals of the faith and in the immorality and hypocrisy of deception and untruth, but it is also marked by a loss of balance, the magnification of the trivial, the opposition to God's will in all areas and aspects of life. The rebellion of apostasy is eventually all-encompassing. It may begin minutely, but ends comprehensively.

The vacuum left by departure from Biblical faith will be filled, and if not by God's truth, then by the perverted and twisted obsessions of men. The loosening of sound doctrine has often resulted in the tightening of human strictures in defiance of the purposes of God. History bears abundant testimony to the tendency toward a false asceticism on the part of those who lose the precious Biblical faith. Denying the Lord who bought them, men strive in the energy and ingenuity of their own flesh to achieve satisfaction.

As Paul indicates, this false asceticism is manifest in two particular areas—marriage and diet. The issues raised by this false asceticism may seem to be relatively insignificant in

comparison with the great issues of doctrinal defection. Paul puts a considerable emphasis, however, on these marks and symptoms of unsound doctrine. False asceticism is the escape of bubbles to the surface which reveals the presence of hidden rotteness beneath. The great apostle takes pains to deal with these practical errors as they point to the more serious and less obvious aberrations. It needs to be said at this point that not all asceticism is evil. The word asceticism comes from the Greek and means exercise or training. We read in the Old Testament of a legitimate and appropriate self-discipline and renunciation. The Nazarites abstained from wine and strong drink and certain meats (Judges 13:4-5). We have instances in both Testaments of fasting. John the Baptist had ascetic tastes. Jesus fasted in the wilderness and spoke of the desirability of celibacy under certain conditions (Matt. 19:12,29) as did the Apostle Paul (I Cor. 7:32).

William Kelly gives what he considers to be the three points of Biblical asceticism as seen in the Scriptures: 1) there is no suggestion of anything intrinsically evil in that which is foregone; 2) there is no universal or even permanent rule of asceticism in the majority of cases; 3) asceticism is not an end in itself but is undertaken with a view to something positive, e.g. repentance, hearing God's word, or more particularly, service (cf *Dictionary of Theology*, p. 68). The false asceticism of which Paul speaks is in contrast at every point with this Biblical asceticism.

Let us look at a few examples in history to discern the general pattern of this tendency. Josephus, the Jewish historian, describes the Essenes as a people who did not

participate in the customary temple ritual of Judaism and who depreciated marriage (*Wars of the Jews*, II, 8, 2). The Qumran community by the Dead Sea may have been an Essene settlement. The Essenes observed the most minute ceremonial scruples and elaborate washings. They were a curious blend of foreign and Jewish elements.

Philo describes a monastic sect in Egypt at the beginning of the Christian era whom he calls the Therapeutae. They renounced the world and lived on very plain food and often fasted. They were a radical offshoot of Judaism. They were even more severe than the Essenes and held some very bizarre views.

Questions of meat and drink became a focal point in the tension between Paul and the Judaizers. The relationship between Judaism and Christianity was not clear to the Judaizers. They conceived of Christianity as simply an adjunct to Judaism. The strict regulation of diet under the Levitical code was not seen in its dispensational setting. The spiritual and sanitary bases for these stringent codes were no longer in force, according to both our Lord and the Apostle Paul (cf Mark 7:18-19, ASV, Romans 14, I Cor. 8, 10, etc.). The decree of the Jerusalem Council sought to point up the radical newness of the church and its order (cf Acts 15:19ff). The failure of the Judaizers to grasp the meaning of the Gospel of the Grace of God in its simplicity and purity allowed them to continue in an emphasis upon the externals of religion and ceremonial observance which Paul viewed with alarm and anxiety (cf Gal. 1-2).

A later sect called the Ebionites were those of Jewish birth who accepted the Messiah but held to an Adoptionist Christology and con-

tinued to observe the Jewish law with considerable vigor. They stressed the law of purification and practiced vegetarianism and other ascetic habits until even into the seventh century.

Another ascetic emphasis in the first century which fronted still another variety of false doctrine is commonly regarded as an incipient form of Gnosticism. Gnosticism as a full-blown system denied that Christ had come in the flesh and asserted that all matter was evil. Achieving some supposed new insights beyond the Biblical revelation, these Gnostics posited a whole galaxy of intermediary beings between God and man, subordinating the uniqueness of Christ and depreciating the centrality of His blood atonement. Gnosticism was a peculiar admixture of certain Christian elements with Greek and Oriental philosophy.

The Colossian heresy bears striking resemblance to what later is called Gnosticism. Subtle inroads had been made into the Colossian assembly by certain individuals who were puffed up by some "super-knowledge" they possessed. Enforcing the rite of circumcision (Col. 2:11) and requiring observance of feasts and special days (2:16), their watchwords were: "Handle not, taste not, touch not" (2:20-22). This fastidious asceticism only sought to conceal the doctrinal bankruptcy of these false teachers, who had in fact displaced the Lord Jesus from His place of preeminency in the plan of God in their vain reasonings (cf 1:13-20, etc.).

For several centuries the church was plagued with varieties of this religio-philosophical asceticism. Marcion in the second century refused marriage for himself and his followers and repudiated the Old Test-

ament and the God of the Old Testament. Saturninus, the founder of Syrian Gnosticism, went so far as to say that marriage and procreation were of the devil. He rejected all animal food.

Tatian, who gave us the first known harmony of the Gospels, was himself really not orthodox. He also founded an ascetic and vegetarian sect called the Encratites (or "continent people"). Celibacy was also practiced. The Manichaeans practiced a strict asceticism. One is certainly struck by the fact that many kinds of heretical groups, from the extra-legalistic Judaistic sects to the most Greek oriented philosophical cults, share in common a false asceticism. It almost seems to be a common denominator of false doctrine.

Of course, monasticism itself, rising in the third century in its most dramatic form, became heir to all of these tendencies beginning with Antony in Upper Egypt, continuing with Jerome and his endless diatribes against matrimony, on to the pillar saints like Simon Stylites, who stayed up on his fifty foot high pillar for 36 years. Monasticism has persisted to the present day. Luther sought to curb the flesh with its passions by beating and starving himself. This severity may indeed be sincerely motivated, but it is of doubtful value against the indulgence of the flesh. This kind of external remedy for inner ills bypasses the chief difficulty.

When we come to more modern times and consider the religious spectrum in our own day, we see how frequently false doctrine is attended by a false and spurious fixation on ascetic issues. What has so often characterized false teaching in the course of this present age continues to this hour and

will be intensified at the end of the age. Let us look now at some contemporary examples.

The first and most obvious contemporary example is Roman Catholicism. Having forsaken "justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law," and having substituted for it an elaborate system of salvation by good works and human merit, Catholicism has persistently been characterized by both of the earmarks of apostasy which Paul describes, "forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats."

Even Catholic historians admit that the clergy were free to marry until the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) in accordance with the practice of the early church (cf I Timothy 3:1-12, etc.). While Paul argued, in opposition to certain Jewish opinion, that celibacy is honorable (I Cor. 7), he makes abundantly clear that marriage is both permissible and honorable. In contrast, it has become the view of Catholics that celibacy is a higher state than that of marriage. It has been pointed out that paralleling the development of Mariolatry in the Roman church, has been the elevation of virginity and celibacy. Pope Gregory VII in 1075 issued decrees that required celibacy of all deacons, priests and bishops. This remains church law.

Similarly the rightful partaking of certain foods has been the subject of much control and prohibition in Catholicism. The Roman church has developed very elaborate customs with respect to abstinence from food before religious festivals and as a preparation for baptism and the eucharist. Preparation for Easter involves forty days of fasting from meat. In certain countries Wednesdays and Fridays became

fast days, these days known as "stations," when Christians were to be on their guard. The Montanists of the fourth century tightened up on the requirement and Friday became a universal day of fasting. Since the new Codex Juris Canonici, given in 1917, only abstinence from flesh meat is required. Other foods may be eaten in any quantity desired. A strict fast before the communion is of course mandatory for all except those who are ill, reflecting the peculiar distortion of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

A more modern movement which displays a similar confusion between law and grace but in an entirely different context, also presents the spectre of a very rigid and legalistic asceticism. Completely disregarding the import of such crucial New Testament passages as Mark 7:18-19, ASV, Acts 10:9-18, etc., the Seventh Day Adventists persist in making a distinction between clean and unclean foods. To quote from an authoritative volume, "If God saw fit that time (i. e. in the days of Moses), to counsel His people against certain articles of diet, these things were not best for human consumption; and since we are physically constituted in the same way as are the Jews and all other peoples, we believe such things are not the best for us to use today" (*Questions on Doctrine*, p. 23). Thus Adventists have forbidden eating of lobsters, crabs, pork, etc. and encourage their "spiritual" followers to follow a vegetarian diet.

Now should a believer wish to be a vegetarian, there is nothing to forbid such a habit. But when an individual or a group lifts up a food prohibition so vigorously that it in effect confuses the basis upon which we have acceptance before God through Christ's mercy alone, we

must raise serious question. We have no right to universalize what may for us be an earnest conscientious scruple (cf Romans 14:1-23).

Most of the contemporary cults with Oriental or eastern associations involve some kind of ascetic practice. Self-Realization Fellowship and the Christian Yoga movement are cases in point. The general refusal of Jehovah's Witnesses to accept blood transfusions and the Christian Science disregard of medical treatment, though for entirely different reasons, are extremes in severity which reflect a depreciation of the body and those processes which God in His providence has raised up to promote its welfare. The filiation of Christian Science with ancient Gnosticism is very striking.

Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was himself something of a food faddist and promoted a "miracle wheat" diet, forbidding his followers to partake of any stimulant, including coffee. Again we are impressed with the fact, even in this cursory survey, that deviation from the great central truths of the Bible seems to invite an emphasis on external and trivial matters, extending sometimes even to rebellion against the very institution of marriage itself and strict regulation of the diet.

To make our relationship to God in either justification or sanctification contingent upon some ascetic regimen is disrespect of God and His precious Word. Any notion that merit before God accrues to those who forbid marriage or abstain from foods is a demonic doctrine. God in the beginning gave both marriage and food to men (cf Gen. 1:28-29, 9:3). What God has given is good and to be received with thanks by those who believe and

know the truth. Marriage and food are ordained by the Creator for the perpetuation of the race.

Marriage and food are good, intrinsically good. Like any good thing which God in His gracious providence gives to men, they may be misused and abused. They are to be received with thanksgiving. We must not call evil that which God calls good. These gifts and their intended purpose are continually being set aside for a holy use by the Word and by prayer.

The body is not evil, a clog upon the soul. Man as body soul and spirit is to be saved and redeemed to the glory of God. Abstinence from the relationships of marriage is permitted only for a time and then by mutual consent (I Cor. 7:5) and fasting may be our resort in seasons of spiritual duress. These exercises are never to be viewed as criteria of orthodoxy or spirituality. "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink . . ." (Col. 2:16).

Ours is the liberty of the sons of God. Yet we recognize that "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby the brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Rom. 14:21). This asceticism of love will limit our liberty. How far must it go? It is only the spiritually sensitized soul that will be able to discern to what extent we shall be tyrannized by the weaker brother in each case.

And in all matters relating to these externals we must ever heed the admonition of the writer to the Hebrews: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established *with grace*; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (Heb. 13:9).

NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES

Roy E. Knuteson, Fair Oaks Baptist Church, Concord, California

Underlying the structure of each of the cults today are basic concepts as old as Satan himself. Paul warned of the "wiles," "snares" "doctrines," and "devices" of the Devil. He flatly declared, "We are not ignorant of his *devices*" (2 Cor. 2: 11), implying, as the word suggests, that Satan has a basic "concept of mind, or pattern of thought" that has remained unchanged throughout the ages of time. The "old dragon" has not changed his tactics, and he cannot change anymore than an "Ethiopian can change his skin, or a leopard his spots" (Jer. 13:23). The same basic methods whereby he duped the first family in the Garden of Eden are in vogue today. Satan may alter his outer garments, and change his name, but the old lion's tail, claws, and growl are still very much in evidence.

Every new generation offers a challenge to the Adversary to spring his old tricks of deception. He is still "walking about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He desires to "sift" men (Luke 22:31) and to "beguile" them (Gen. 3:13), and many have "turned aside to Satan" (1 Tim. 5:15)

A survey of church history reveals that the age-old heresies, all once condemned in ecclesiastical councils, continue to show up in each century, proving again that the "God of this age" is still about his diabolical work. He has not changed.

Christians need to be aware of his tactics and to "resist him steadfast in the faith" (1 Peter 5:9). Many who "are captured at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26) fail to recognize the "wiles" or "methods" (Eph. 6: 11) so commonly practiced by "the son of the morning" (Isa. 14:12).

Basic to any defense system is an understanding of the enemy's strength, weapons, and tactics. The degree of conquest and victory is directly related to our knowledge of these vital matters, whether it be in the physical or spiritual realm.

An examination of the Bible on this subject reveals at least four "methods" regularly practised by the arch-enemy of Christ.

1. In Relation to the Scriptures

The first thing that ought to be observed is that Satan *cannot* quote the Scriptures aright. He either questions its authority, wrenches it from its context, or deliberately misquotes, or adds to it.

In Eden's garden, he used this "more subtle" approach as he questioned the Word of God by asking: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1) Millenniums later, his followers ask: "Where is the promise of his (Christ's) coming?" (2 Peter 3:4), again casting doubt upon the veracity of God's word. Every attempt by ancient and modern man to discredit or question the Bible and its integrity is a manifest token of Satan's changeless "methods."

A favorite trick of the enemy is to take a passage of Scripture *out of* its context in order to use it for his own pre-designed and evil purposes. To the second man, Christ, Satan said: "Cast thyself down (from the temple pinnacle) for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up . . ." (Matt. 4:6). The setting of this quotation from Psalm 91 is completely ignored by the Devil in his

foolish insistence that the Son of God recklessly leap from the temple pinnacle. No protection is promised in the Psalm quoted for daring foolhardy ventures like this. Jesus knew this and brushed Satan aside with a direct quotation from the same Old Testament scriptures.

Informed, alert believers recognize this method in the glib Bible quotations by the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. The supposed support for the existence of the Book of Mormon from Ezekiel 37:16,17 vanishes when the rest of the chapter is read. The violation of this basic hermeneutical principle of Bible interpretation is what gives rise to the fantastic prophetic schemes of the Seventh Day Adventists and British Israelites. The "day-year" theory of these two cults collapses when the context of their "proof-texts" is examined.

Satan loves to deliberately *misquote* and *add to* the Word of God. To Eve, he said: "You shall *not* surely die!" (Gen. 3:4) in direct contradiction to the plain statement of Almighty God in Genesis 2:7. The Mormons' contention that Jesus was born in *Jerusalem* (cf. John 7:42) further illustrates this "method" of the Evil One. All of the "additional revelation," whether it be the claims of Ellen G. White, Mary Baker Eddy, Joseph Smith, The Pope of Rome, or the anonymous penmen for the Watch Tower Society simply multiplies the evidence that the "lion still roars" (1 Peter 5:8). The omniscient God sounded the warning: "If any shall ADD . . . or TAKE AWAY from the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life . . ." (Rev. 22:18-19).

2. In Relation to the Saviour

Paul emphatically states that "the

god of this world (age) hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, *who is the image of God* should shine unto them . . ." (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan knows who Jesus Christ is. There is no doubt about this. The "anointed cherub" (Ezek. 28:14-15) knew the "Word, who was with God" (John 1:1). In the temptation of Christ, the Devil affirms this knowledge by stating: "*Since* (not "if" as in A.V.) you are the Son of God . . ." (Matt. 4:3)

While Satan knows and recognizes the deity of our Lord, he continues to blind men's minds to this truth. The religious people of Jesus' day said: "*If* thou be the Christ, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). The nation of Israel could not accept His deity, hence the crucifixion. That blindness continues even until this day. (2 Cor. 3:14) The diabolical teaching of the Mormon church that Jesus Christ was the natural offspring of Adam and Mary shows the present-day manifestation of that blindness. In these attempts to discredit the Son of Man, Satan is still striving to exalt his throne "above the stars of God" (Isa. 14:13).

Every individual, whether he be cultist or modernist, perpetuates "the lie" (2 Thess. 2:11) of Satan, whenever the divinity, virgin birth, or integrity of Jesus Christ is questioned. The Bible affirms the deity of our Saviour, but Satan deplores it. There is still "division among the people because of Him (Christ)" (John 7:43).

The anti-Christ spirit of Satan not only attacks the *person* of Christ by clouding men's minds to the truth, but he attempts to discredit His *works* as well. Jesus said: "Believe the works that ye may know and be-

lieve that the Father is in me and I in Him" (John 10:38). Yet, the religious leaders of the first century charged Christ as being empowered by demonic power (John 10:10). They minimized His mighty works (John 9:24), and even attempted to destroy the evidence of His power! (cf. John 12:10-11). Nineteen hundred years later His miracles are still being ignored, denied, or explained away. Satan's "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:15) continue their diabolical monologue.

The "old dragon" is not completely satisfied, however, for in one last master stroke of strategy he will establish his "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3) who shall perform "signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). The Devil's last attempt to discredit the Saviour and His work will be the introduction of his own "anti (or substitute) christ."

The doom of all such doctrine and devices is clearly announced in the prophecy of the Bible: "The Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever" (Rev. 20:10).

3. In Relation to Salvation

Having twisted the scriptures, and denied the Saviour, the next natural "method" of Satan is to destroy God's plan of salvation. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and the doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). The "doctrine" of Satan and his demonic hordes is a religion of works. In spite of the clear Bible statement: "By grace are ye saved through faith . . . *not of works* lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9), the Devil has warped the minds of men to cause them to

believe that they can "work the works of God" (John 6:28), and thus merit eternal life!

Legalism or human works of righteousness are condemned by Paul in Galatians 1:6-9. Whether it be the "observance of days, months and years" (Gal. 4:10), the "abstinence from meats" (1 Tim. 4:3), "much praying" (Matt. 6:7), "sabbath worship" (Col. 2:16), "baptisms" (Heb. 6:2), or even a ministry of supernatural wonders (cf. Matt. 7:21-23), it is still the work of the flesh and rests under the curse of God. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). "For without faith it is impossible to please God . . ." (Heb. 11:6). Therefore, it is "to him that WORK-ETH NOT, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted or righteousness . . . blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity" (Rom. 4:5, 8). Bible salvation is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy . . ." (Titus 3:5).

Every religion, cult, or ism that denies the grace of God for salvation and security, rests under the anathema of the Almighty. (Gal. 1:8).

4. In Relation to Self

Lucifer was self-deceived. He believed that he could "be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14). He, himself, demanded worship (Matt. 4:9). His "devices" or "conceptions of mind" (2 Cor. 2:11) are that he alone is right and that God and His word are wrong. He transformed himself "into an angel of light, and it is therefore no great thing that his ministers be transformed as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14-15).

Satan's followers, like himself, are "vainly puffed up in their fleshly

minds" (Col. 2:18). Every cult demonstrates this *exclusivistic* spirit. They all claim to be the only true religion established by God. It would appear as though Satan's kingdom is divided as his dupes war among themselves for the populace of this planet. Yet basically, they are all warring for him. His hosts are dressed in various disguises and arrayed in strange formations, but they are readily recognized by this spirit of self deception which permeates the whole pack.

All "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:13) will boast of their huge temples, number of congregations, radio outreach, literature distribution, and total constituency "supposing that gain is godliness" (2 Tim. 6:5). How deceived they are! They have swallowed the line of the Deceiver, but "their end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:15).

Jesus rebuked this sectarian spirit.

When his disciples complained of one who "followed not with us" (Lu. 9:49), He said: Whosoever is not against us is for us" (Lu. 9:50), proving that this isolation spirit of the cults is wrong along with their erroneous doctrine.

Conclusion

Satan will continue to perpetuate his methods of deceit regarding the Scriptures, the Saviour, salvation, and self. An informed Christian, however, should be able to detect his tactics regardless of attire or title, and turn away, not lending ear, nor support to these diabolical systems of error.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: for many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

"Prove all things; hold fast to the good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

"But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from the evil (one)" (2 Thess. 3:3).

HOW TO TELL A FALSE RELIGION

by Richard C. Halverson

The Apostle John makes it quite clear that the Christian has no option in this matter of false prophets (1 John 4:1-3). The Bible warns us over and over again that there are many false prophets going out into the world masquerading often as angels of light, as servants of Christ, taking portions of the Bible and using them in a way to deceive the children of God.

So much of Christianity has been watered down that we have become infected with an innocuous climate that has generated a sickly, thin, anemic attitude of tolerance. We're supposed to tolerate everybody and everything. If we raise our voice

against anything we're accused of being unChristian. This, however, is not the spirit of the New Testament or of Jesus Christ Himself (as we shall see). He loved men but He was indignant against false teachers. "Better a millstone" . . . "Better never born" . . . said He concerning those who would lead others astray.

If one will not tolerate poison that can destroy a man's body, how much less should one tolerate poison that can destroy a man's soul? If we are careful of what we put into our stomachs, how much more ought we to be careful of what we feed our minds? Once in a while a good, strong, healthy dose of intolerance is

legitimate for a Christian. We ought to be intolerant of sin. We ought to be intolerant of error. We ought to be intolerant of heresy. We ought to be intolerant of falsehood. We ought to be intolerant of false prophets and anti-Christ that do everything they can to lead people away from Jesus Christ and do it in His name.

Note that we do not judge false prophets; they judge themselves by what they teach. Jesus Christ said, "by their fruits ye shall know them," and He was talking about false prophets when He said it.

What we propose to do is not to judge any teacher or prophet (if the shoe fits, put it on), but to lay down scriptural standards by which the teaching of every prophet ought to be judged. At the outset, let it be understood that we recognize the Bible to be the final authority — the final arbiter — the last word. What we say must square with the Scriptures also.

It's not what someone else says the Bible teaches, not what some other book says the Bible teaches; it is what the Bible itself says about itself. The only correct interpretation of scripture is scripture itself. We compare scripture with scripture, passage with passage until the balance of teaching is reached in the Scriptures. One is not qualified to say "this is what the Bible teaches" about any single subject until he has read everything the Bible has to say about that subject.

The Bible takes a very serious view of false prophets. Paul says in Gal. 1:8 "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." Those are strong words. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening

wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:15, 16).

Let us be reminded that Christians have been admonished to test for truth. We have no right to listen to any teaching, whatever it is, and accept it gullibly. We have been commanded to be sure to find out that what we listen to is true or false. That's a command — that's an order from the Lord! "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets are gone out in the world. Hereby know ye the spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world" (1 John 4:1-3).

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Rev. R. F. "Mac" McInay

Pastor of Powderhorn Park Baptist Church of Minneapolis, Minn.

QUESTION . . . *Are there any clear marks whereby a Christian can identify an apostate teacher?*

ANSWER . . . Yes, the whole book of Jude may be called the "Acts of the Apostates." Many clear marks are presented by Jude, but let me call your attention to just three of them:

"The Way of Cain" . . . A False Religion, Jude 11. All false religions which deny the efficacy of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse from sin come under this phrase, "The Way of Cain." Note 2 Peter 2:1-3 . . . they cleverly leave out or deny the blood of Christ. Contrast Hebrews 9:22 with John 1:29.

"The Error of Balaam" . . . A False Ministry, Jude 11. Turn to chapters 22 through 25 of the book of Numbers, and read the story of Balaam, how he "caused the children of Israel . . . to commit trespass against the Lord to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication" (Numbers 31:16; Rev. 2:14). And Balaam represents every false minister who holds his position for personal profit, whether it be for money or influence or popularity. Such a false shepherd removes the curse of the Cross from his message.

"The Gainsaying of Core" . . . A False Worship, Jude 11. Read Numbers 16:1-15 for the whole story of Korah (Korah is Hebrew, and Core is Greek). Korah's sin was that of rebellion against God's appointed priests and intrusion into the presence of God without divine authority, see Hebrews 5:4. Christ is God's chosen priest (see Hebrews chapter 7 and 1 Tim. 2:5) and we have no divine authority for worship apart from His Son, Jesus Christ. These three marks in Jude 11 inevitably go together, and will easily enable you to discern any apostate.