

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

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SOME GUIDELINES IN DEALING WITH CULTISTS

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

The cultists are so widely spread throughout the country that undoubtedly every Christian has met some of these people. The cultic emissaries usually reach into every community of the land. Their established procedure is to canvas systematically area upon area until every home has been reached. As a rule they go in pairs ringing the door-bells and peddling their literature. Their leaders have fully instructed these propagandists how to approach people, and they seldom deviate from the standard procedure in seeking to gain proselytes. Despite the glaring falsehoods which they spread, at least one must admire the courage of their convictions. In other words, they are not afraid to stand for something. And, most of these propagandists have a broad familiarity with the teaching of their group that is often lacking among the evangelicals. To illustrate, it would be well if Christian people knew as much why they believe in the doctrine of the Trinity as the Jehovah's Witnesses know why they do not believe in it. Again, we find that the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, and other representatives of the cults are impelled by a great sense of urgency that, somehow, has been lost among the majority of the members of the Christian churches.

Obviously the liberal churches have long since lost any sense of urgency because their message is mainly an emphasis on social reconstruction and not the Gospel of Christ. Moreover, those who are peddling cultic propaganda in order to gain disciples, do not fear to be different. On the other hand, we usually find that those who represent evangelical groups have a tendency to want to be accepted by their fellow-men. Indeed, cultists have no fear of experiencing doors being shut in their faces, or of being rebuked by those who oppose these disseminators of falsehood. It might well be said, that those who are about spreading the teachings of the various cultic groups actually live in an atmosphere of urgency. In other words, their time and energies are given willingly in order to win as many new disciples as possible. As a result of having these commendable qualities, the leading cults, especially the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, are among the fastest growing religious groups in the world. Statistics indicate that in many areas these cults have doubled, and often multiplied many times during recent decades.

The question which now crowds to the front for attention is this: how should we as Bible-believing people

treat these misguided zealots? This writer is convinced that many Christian people have pursued wrong paths in this regard, and these should be avoided. By means of this article we hope to help many of you who may not have the experience, or clear convictions as to the best ways of meeting these peddlers of error.

WRONG METHODS OFTEN PURSUED

A common path often pursued by many Christian people is that of ignoring the presence and the activities of the various cultists. Those who represent this class are usually not concerned about finding effective means in dealing with those who have erred. Unfortunately those who follow this path do not read literature to gain information regarding false teachings, and how to help those who are ensnared by falsehoods. In other words, many church people simply ignore the cults altogether. This is a very unrealistic course to follow, especially at a time when cultic groups in America number more than 8 million people, and when nearly every Christian has some relative, friend, or neighbor who is identified with some cult.

Others follow the method of excessive harshness in dealing with those who are ensnared by error. By harshness is meant literally slamming the door shut in the faces of cultic representatives who come to the house. It is clear from II John, vs. 10-11, that we are not to welcome such people into our houses, or extend hospitality to the peddlers of false doctrines. But an act of firmness must not be confused with rudeness or discourteous behaviour. Rather, I feel, we simply should inform these disseminators of error in words like these: We do not believe in that which you teach, and we do not wish to spend any time in

discussing these matters. And they may then be dismissed without resorting to unChristian tactics.

A third way is to argue vigorously with these representatives of the cults when they come to your home. After many years of study, and a careful evaluation of the activities of the cults, I am convinced that very few, if any, will be brought to the truth, either through skillful arguments or the downgrading of the spurious groups by a rapid flow of words, and the utilization of logic. The fact of the matter is that people do not like to be defeated in a personal encounter with the one who is better informed than those who are spreading error. Usually human nature is unwilling to accept defeat in a confrontation. Actually these people who go from house to house are brain-washed by their leaders and hence they are not open-minded or ready to yield to you even if you are able to summon logical arguments in refuting the doctrines which these propagandists advocate.

THE POSITIVE METHOD

First of all, I feel we should use great skill and discernment in selecting the best literature which is available on the current cults. And we should have an ample supply of this literature in our homes and offices, or places of employment, in order to have it conveniently near whenever it is needed. I carry such literature in my automobile so that it is available at all times. This has stood me in good stead on many occasions. In addition, it is very important to utilize the mail service when we wish to reach people at some distance who are endangered by the emissaries of the cults. Recently as wife and I were leaving a restaurant, a lady spoke to me from a table where she and her mother were seated with a friend,

waiting to be served. This lady reminded me that she had talked with me over the phone about literature which she needed and later received for a friend who was being led into the Jehovah's Witnesses cult. This friend was now seated at the table with these two Christian women. She had abandoned the false doctrines and was dedicated to live for Christ. It was hardening to hear how literature had served as an eye-opener as well as the means through which the Spirit of God had brought about a change and a joyful Christian experience. This woman had been led to the truth through literature after having been misled by the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. During the many years that I have directed the work of Religion Analysis Service, I have been convinced that literature is of primary importance in dealing with those who have erred.

Moreover, we should have true compassion for these misguided people who live in our communities. Some of these are often our next-door neighbors. Indeed, we must be uncompromisingly opposed to the teachings to which these people adhere, yet at the same time we must not write them off as men and women beyond our reach or help. It is quite difficult at times to be compassionate to these blind zealots who are busily engaged in spreading their false teachings. We may not be able to win very many of them to Christ, yet we cannot escape a certain responsibility in doing our best for our confused fellowmen. James writes, "If any of you err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). Only the grace of God will enable us to be compassionate and concerned for the souls of

those who have abandoned the truth for the teachings of the modern charlatans and quacks. This, then, is the Scriptural way in dealing with those who have erred.

In addition, it is important whenever it is possible for us to give these deluded people our personal testimony regarding our acceptance of Jesus Christ. These people who are led astray by the cultists are daily concerned about works, and especially in peddling literature. But unfortunately they know nothing adequately about the grace of the Lord, or being born again. A bold, personal testimony in their presence will give great weight, spiritually speaking, to any encounter with the cultists. The apostle Paul used this technique on many occasions as he faced rulers and potentates who were strangers to the Gospel of Christ. Both Felix and King Agrippa were deeply impressed by Paul's testimony. It was difficult, or even impossible for Paul himself to shake off the glorious testimony of Stephen, the martyr, at the time of his death. Without a doubt it was easier for Christ to apprehend Paul and bring him into Christianity as a result of the earlier testimony of Stephen. Those who come to our doors will find it hard to dismiss completely from their minds the story of what great things our Lord has done for us, and what a joy the Christian experience has brought about. Truly, we need to keep before us at all times, the Great Commission of Christ, namely, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We are not to exclude anyone from the presentation of the Gospel of Christ. This obviously includes the cultists. Witnessing is a positive method, and it rests upon a Scriptural base. I fear many

Christians fail in their responsibility of witnessing to their fellow-man. When we have the courage of following the right method, God will bless

our efforts, and most rewarding experiences will come to those who are faithful to the teachings of the Word of God.

CULTIC DISTORTION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

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Basic to all theological and spiritual understanding is the question of the authority of Holy Scripture. From the very beginning Satan has sought to destroy confidence in the Word of God. The Deceiver and Father of lies sought to insert doubt about God's Word when he said to Eve in the Garden, "Yea, hath God said?" (Gen. 3:1).

The integrity and authority of the Word of God have been the focal point of the frantic onslaughts of rationalistic higher criticism and the more subtle strategies of neo-orthodoxy. In either case our Lord's dictum that "The Scripture cannot be broken" is challenged and the reason and experience of man are placed above that which is written.

It is not surprising then to observe that one of the hallmarks of cultic deviation is the implicit or explicit denial of the authority of the Word of God. It is our purpose here to trace some of the forms which this cultic denial of the authority of the Word of God may take.

DILUTION OF SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

The last chapter of Holy Writ gives us a solemn warning against either adding to or taking away from the words of the book (Rev. 22:18-19). While this applies specifically to the Revelation, the general principle has

wider application. By taking away from the Scripture we diminish its authority. When Thomas Jefferson's famous abbreviated New Testament omitted the resurrection narratives and concluded with the death of our Lord, he was of course depriving man of all hope and salvation.

The cults have tended rather to add to the Scripture through additional works which officially or for all practical purposes stand on a parity with the Bible as the source of authority. Mormonism is unwilling to recognize the fact that "God has spoken in His Son" (Heb. 1:1-2) and that special revelation in this unique sense concluded with the closing of the New Testament canon. Believing that special revelation in this sense continues, Mormons accord to **The Book of Mormon, The Pearl of Great Price, and Doctrine and Covenants** a place equal to or superior to the Bible. In fact, Joseph Fielding Smith, now President of the Mormon Church, has observed: "Guided by **The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants** and the Spirit of the Lord, it is not difficult for one to discern the errors in the Bible" (**Mormon Doctrine**, pp. 509-10, as quoted in Anthony A. Hoekema, **The Four Major Cults**, p. 23). The alleged superiority of these added volumes to the Bible is clearly implied.

Christian Science believes in the inspiration of the Bible as it is in-

terpreted by **Science and Health** written by Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy. This in fact means that the ultimate source of authority for Christian Science becomes **Science Health**. The Bible itself is relegated to a place of secondary importance.

While Seventh Day Adventism seeks to maintain that they do not regard the writings of Ellen G. White as having the same authority as the Bible, the stubborn fact remains that her supposedly unique gift of prophecy is seen as giving Seventh Day Adventism exclusive insights into the programs and purposes of God. Her statements are consistently quoted as authority along with the Bible and appear to be the court of last appeal.

When any human teacher or system of interpretation becomes decisive, we have diluted the authority of the Word of God. Even when the great Apostle Paul opened the Word in Berea, his utterance was not simply accepted and equated in any sense as infallible interpretation with the Scriptures themselves. Rather do we read, "They received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). The result of this proper procedure is clearly spelled out, "Therefore many of them believed" (Acts 17:12a).

The Roman Catholics have founded basically in regard to the principle of authority—tradition has been admitted as authority equal with the Bible. Liberalism sees human judgment and intuition on a par with any pronouncement of Scripture, not realizing that "the inner light has often led to the outer darkness." There is only one safe and sound course—adherence to the undiluted authority of the pure Word of God. We do not judge the Word of God but must submit ourselves to its judgment of us.

DISTORTION OF SCRIPTURAL MEANING

A sign outside an industrial shop once advertised, "All kinds of twisting and turning done here." Such could describe the distortion of clear Scriptural meanings at the hands of cultic interpreters. The strange idea anything can be proved by the Bible is a blatant repudiation of the law of contradiction and the canons of good sense and proper interpretation without which meaningful discourse of any kind is impossible.

The **New World Bible** of the Jehovah's Witnesses is an example of erroneous mistranslation and devious scholarship. A striking instance is the notoriously inaccurate translation of John 1:1 which they give as: "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." The predicate noun would be considered definite rather than indefinite according to the well-known Colwell's rule, but this has been defiantly disregarded by the translators of the **New World Bible**. Though the Jehovah's Witnesses claim a high view of the Scripture they bend and shape any passage which does not conform to their heretical Arian view of the Lord Jesus Christ. We stand with Athanasius of old who said: "Jesus whom I know as my Redeemer cannot be less than God!" Passage after passage affirms the absolute and full deity of our Blessed Lord, but the cultist will simultaneously affirm his faith in the Bible and his rank disavowal of what the Bible clearly teaches concerning the Saviour.

Christian Science beginning with its pantheistic presuppositions recasts everything which the Bible says about God, the nature of man, the reality of sin and death into virtually unrecognizable form. If as they maintain, God is all, and God is good, then

all must be good, even if one must fly in the face of every representation of the Word of God and everything in our experience of reality. When Mrs. Eddy maintains that "Whatever is, is God," she chooses to ignore the creator-creature distinction everywhere enforced within Scripture. When she argues that Jesus our Lord did not really suffer and did not really die and did not really rise from the grave, we can only conclude that she and her followers make no serious effort to understand the Word of God, but only pervert and twist the obvious factual representations of the Bible.

The Mormons likewise purport to accept the Bible as correctly translated, but grossly misinterpret what the Bible clearly teaches about the spirituality of God, the lostness of man, the person and work of our Lord, and the way of salvation. Justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law is totally rejected by the Mormons. They see Christ's atonement as making possible a chance for man to earn his own salvation. The emphasis among Mormons falls upon earning salvation by good works.

Could anything be clearer in the New Testament than Paul's exposition in Romans 3 of the utter spiritual bankruptcy and lostness of mankind and salvation totally apart from human merit only by the shed blood of Christ? Yet the doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law is termed "a pernicious doctrine" by the Mormon writer, James Talmadge. Much discussion with many Mormons has shown me the tragic and fatal consequences of this with many other denials of Biblical faith. These people are great workers, but their sole confidence is not in the efficacy and sufficiency of the blood of Christ.

However moral and upright they may be, they are lost apart from Christ. They just do not take the Word of God as it clearly is on the all-important issue of how a man comes into a right relationship with God through faith.

We see in Mormonism what we see in Theosophy and Spiritualism, that once we abandon the clear Biblical teaching on the person and work of Jesus Christ, we are susceptible to all kinds of bizarre and outlandish teachings. The Bible then becomes simply a source for proof-texts and Bible study becomes a fishing for fragments and figments to substantiate and prove all kinds of weird and curious notions. The idea that the Lord Jesus was married and a polygamist or that Jesus ministered in the western hemisphere before ascending to heaven are totally without support or suggestion in Scripture. So now the English radical, John Allegro seeks seriously to support the idea that Jesus was in fact a sacred mushroom! This is sheer madness and lunacy, the absurdity of which is not apparent to all, for some seem perfectly willing to "believe the lie."

DENIAL OF SCRIPTURAL TRUTH

Seventh-day Adventists interpretation of Scripture discloses some strange handling of Scripture which is very disconcerting to serious students of the Bible. Mrs. White's ambiguities on the sinlessness of Jesus have only been compounded by later statements of other leaders in the movement. The strange distinction between the forgiveness of sin and the blotting out of sin coupled with the notion of an investigative judgment raises questions and challenges to the Biblical doctrine of the perfection and sufficiency of Christ's atoning work.

While Adventists loudly acclaim their fidelity to the Gospel teaching about the grace of God, for all practical purposes their teaching amounts to a "saved by grace but kept by works" theology in which keeping the commandments becomes the ultimate keystone of salvation or doom. Here we see how a clear teaching of the Word of God can be negated and virtually lost by the imposition of a man-made emphasis, as the following quotation from the well-known Adventist William Henry Branson clearly shows:

"A Christian who through faith in Jesus Christ has faithfully kept the law's requirements will be acquitted (in the investigative judgment); there is no condemnation, for the law finds no fault in him. If, on the other hand, it is found that one has broken even a single precept, and this transgression is unconfessed, he will be dealt with just as if he had broken all ten." (*Drama of the Ages*, p. 351).

If the resolution of the issue of being saved or lost is deferred until the investigative judgment thus described, and if obedience to the law becomes the touchstone of acceptance, then all possibility of the assurance of salvation and resting in the merits and sufficiency of Christ's once-and-for-all atonement for sin vanishes into thin air. The prominence of the Sabbath question and the obsession of the movement with this issue tends to obscure and obliterate the simplicity and glory of God's wonderful way of salvation for lost sinners. The New Testament is clear and lucid, but Seventh-day Adventism has lost its way in the vagaries of human invention and legalistic bondage. Again we see that this disastrous deviation has arisen from a departure from the authority of the Word itself. Would to God that our

friends might be delivered from this web of entanglement and error.

Another very glaring case of the misuse of the Word of God is the incredible spiritual monstrosity known as British Israelism. This fantastic fancy has drawn many aside from things vital and eternal. Blending numerous but unrelated passages the devotees of this persuasion seek to make the Anglo-Saxon peoples out to be the lost tribes of Israel and Great Britain "the stone-kingdom" of Biblical prophecy. Darms cites some crucial perversions of Scripture used in support of their position, such as that Israel was to change his name (Hosea 1:9), increase beyond number, dwell in islands (Isa. 24:15), to the north (Jer. 3:12) and the west, and and be a great nation (Micah 5:8). Israel would also extend beyond his new limits and found colonies (Isa. 49:19, 20; 54:3, Deut. 28:1, 32:7-9). One of the tribes, Manasseh, was to become an independent nation (Gen. 48:19). From this tribe, we are told the United States was derived. Reference is found to the lion and the unicorn in Numbers 24:8,9 and to the American eagle in Ezekiel 17:3. The promise that Israel shall possess the gates of her enemies (Gen. 22:17, 24:60) is fulfilled in the case of Britain by the possession of Gibraltar, Aden, Singapore, etc. etc. (cf Anton Darms, *The Delusion of British Israelism*, p. 26). One wonders how the demise of British fortunes through the world is explained by those who still hang on to this outlandish system.

As a matter of fact the ten lost tribes are not really lost, and the word "Jew" became a general term to describe any Israelite from any of the twelve tribes. This usage is seen already in the Old Testament in Esther and Daniel and even in the works of Josephus. Paul of the tribe

of Benjamin was denominated a Jew and Peter was called a Jew by Paul. James addressed his epistle to "the twelve tribes" (James 1:1). When one begins to delve into the outlandish historical juggling characteristic of this heresy, one stands utterly aghast. How can anyone seriously maintain that the prophet Jeremiah married his ward Tea Tephi to the Irish prince, Heremonn? These circumlocutions often accompanied by fixation on the pyramids of Egypt only serve to warn us of the grave danger of "turning aside" from the truth of God (I Tim. 1:6), of "erring from the truth," (II Tim. 2:18), "resisting the truth," (II Tim. 3:8), "turning away from the truth" (II Tim. 4:4).

DESTRUCTION OF SCRIPTURAL VALIDITY

No more conspicuous an example of "wresting of the Scripture" can be found than is seen in the pronouncements and ministry of Herbert W. Armstrong and the Radio Church of God. Believers need to be warned and wary of this master of deceit, who has spun together Jehovah's Witness theology, Seventh-day Adventism legalism and British-Israel prophecy in such a menacing mix as has deceived and deluded millions in our time. I believe Armstrongism is one of the most effective and powerful tools Satan has today.

Herbert Armstrong argues that the throne of England is the throne of David. Armstrong is preaching that the millennium will begin in less than 15 years (*Tomorrow's World*, May-June, 1970). But these errors and his astonishing megalomania are really the last of our concerns. This cult denies the doctrine of the Holy Trinity,

denies the bodily resurrection of Christ, believes that man may become as God. Armstrong does not believe a person can be "born again" until the resurrection of the body. He teaches "The blood of Christ does not finally save any man . . . the death of Christ merely paid the penalty of sin in our stead—it wipes the slate clean of our past sins—it saves us merely from the death penalty—but the Bible teaches that none is yet saved!" (*Why Were You Born?* p. 11).

The fact of the matter is that the Bible clearly states the believer has been born again (I Peter 1:23). "By grace we have been saved" (Eph. 2:8). And yet Armstrong's web of heresy reaches millions by TV and radio and *Plain Truth* has a circulation of over 2,000,000!

We know that truth is not a circle which includes all error. How can we explain the proliferation of false teachings and the spread of apostasy in our time? These departures from "the faith" begin invariably with a moving away from the authority of Holy Scripture. This is why we believe that the question of the inspiration and authority of the Bible is so crucial and vital. Cultic deviation such as we have described is the end-product of an abandonment of the authority of the Word of God. "And let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall!" May we in true humility and genuine reliance upon the Holy Spirit bow our minds and wills daily before the authority of "Thus saith the Lord." Only as we remain true to the Word of God and responsive to its truths shall we be preserved and delivered from delusion and error.

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THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM

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How did the modern idea of church union get started? Much can be gained in understanding the current ecumenical movement, which is receiving such widespread publicity even in the secular press, when the historical and theological background of the effort is known. It all started with the rise of theological liberalism which was born in and grew out of the man-centered philosophies of the Renaissance and the periods which followed. There were always threats to Biblical Christianity but those which began around the fifteenth century and found their origin in humanistic philosophy began attacking the historic Christian faith from without.

Faith in man was the cry of the Renaissance (1453-1690). Philosophers of this period had a profound interest in this world. A genuine faith in reason and the capabilities of man in this life crowded out virtually all interest in God and His revelation to man. Without making a concerted and dedicated attempt to overthrow Biblical Christianity the philosophers of the day succeeded in introducing a complete and widespread skepticism of the Bible. God and the Bible were dethroned. Man was elevated and became the standard and norm of truth.

With the passing of time and the introduction of more philosophers the attacks against Christianity became stronger and stronger. Though most of these men maintained some sort of belief in God, their students and those who were exposed to their philosophies soon realized, as Im-

manuel Kant did, that the existence of God could not be proven or demonstrated rationally. The natural corollary of this course was the rejection of the miraculous and all the great Biblical doctrines of the faith and then the inspiration and authority of the Bible itself.

These secular philosophers had a direct influence upon the theologians who started theological liberalism. Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher has rightly been called the father of liberalism. Born in Germany in 1768 and influenced greatly by the humanistic philosophies, he founded his authority, not in the mind of man as the philosophers had done, but in the soul's experiences. The point is, he along with many of his contemporaries rejected the Bible as the authoritative revelation of God to man. Schleiermacher introduced a theology of feeling. For him, Christianity was not revealed in a set of propositions recorded in a book called the Bible, but by an inner feeling or experience. Subjective feeling was his source of authority rather than objective fact. This meant that all the Biblical terminology concerning doctrine was invested with new meaning. Soon many others became enamored with the views of Schleiermacher. They saw his views as an inviting alternative to the purely rationalistic philosophies before him. In one sense then, Schleiermacher and his followers were reacting against the purely rationalistic approach of the day. Yet they were by no means returning to the authority of Holy Writ for their views. With the passing of time

scholars soon began to assimilate and combine elements of rationalism and the theology of feeling of Schleiermacher. They addressed themselves to the Bible. At first the Gospels were attacked as many of the features of historic Christianity and the findings of the philosophers were combined. Very naturally human reason soon became the determining factor as to what was and what was not the Word of God. Whereas the Bible once stood over man as judge, now man was standing over the Bible as its judge. What had been done to the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament was soon done to the Old Testament.

Science added its weight to that of philosophy and theology attempting to make Christianity untenable. The discoveries of science made the earth and man appear as very unimportant. Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* in 1859 succeeded in bringing doubt and disrepute upon the Bible, especially the first few chapters of Genesis. Theologians who rejected the authority of Scripture and accepted Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis introduced what has come to be known as higher criticism. This was simply the application of Darwin's theory of evolution and the survival of the fittest to the Bible. Those who applied this method to the Bible sought to discover the origin of ideas set forth in Scripture. They also attempted to determine at what points the Bible was true and at what points it was false. Theologians who accepted the findings of the higher critics and who were sympathetic to them were occupying places of prominence in Europe. Many students from America went abroad for a theological education. Very naturally as they studied under these men and this liberal influence they imbibed much of what they were taught. Returning to America these men brought their theolog-

ical liberalism with them and found the climate in this country quite receptive to them. The "Christianity" which they proclaimed and promoted in their pulpits and positions of Christian leadership was diametrically opposed to the historic Christian faith. The cardinal doctrines of the faith were candidly and forthrightly rejected. For many of them the Bible was composed of nothing but myths and legends. The inspiration of the Bible was boldly rejected and redefined in terms of the human author rather than what was written. Such unbelief was only the natural result of applying the scientific method to the Bible. The liberal theologians tried to put God in a test tube and ruled out as mythological what He had said in His Word. One extreme of unbelief led to another. Even the actual existence of Jesus in space-time history was doubted by many. The early church, it was said, invented the Jesus myth. This kind of rejection represented the liberal theology of the nineteenth century, especially in Europe.

In America the influence of such unbelief was also being felt. Many were questioning and rejecting the great tenets of the faith. Even the basic fundamentals of the faith stressed by the Reformers were being denied. The sole authority of the Scriptures and salvation by faith alone were being compromised and denied. The Great Awakening spearheaded by Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield was a reaction to the theological liberalism which had crept into the churches. The worth of man was being preached instead of the Biblical doctrine of the exceeding sinfulness of man.

Soon after the revivals of the Great Awakening the denial of the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, and of course the authority of the

Bible soon followed. Even though the revivals did not stop the spread of liberal theology, they did stem its tide temporarily. The word and writings of Horace Bushnell and Walter Rauschenbush with their emphasis upon the "social gospel" soon spread widely and became the liberal rallying point. Through the propagation of the "social gospel" the liberals denied the Biblical doctrine of man's sinfulness and concentrated their efforts upon making the world a better place in which to live. They emphasized the idea of a coming utopia or kingdom brought about through human effort. After the world was cured of all sin the kingdom would be established through man's endeavor. Liberals sincerely believed and preached that the world was becoming better and better. The successful industrialization which was taking place at the time aided the contention of the liberal spokesman.

Liberal churchmen, who had already denied the major tenets of the faith, endeavored to unite churches into large bodies so their cause could be promoted on a wide scale. The National Federation of Churches and Christian Workers, formed in 1901, was an example of such an effort. Growing out of that organization in 1908 was the Federal Council of Churches which was under liberal leadership and promoted the liberal doctrines and gave particular stress to the "social gospel," the doctrines of the universal fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. The Federal Council of Churches became the National Council of Churches in 1950 and in 1948 the World Council of Churches was formed giving worldwide impetus to the drive for church union. More will be said about these organizations later. Reaction to the old liberal theology came from various quarters. Fundamentalists were

not the only ones who found fault with liberalism. Even the unchurched humanists reacted. They insisted, and very logically, that if the liberal churchmen were right in their view of God, man, sin, and salvation, there was little or no need for any revelation from God. Carried to their logical conclusion the liberal doctrines ruled out completely any need for the Bible. Man could get along just as well without it. Also, the First World War was a reaction to the liberal belief in a golden age, a utopia, about to be ushered in by human efforts. What more devastating reply to the liberal doctrines of man's goodness and his establishment of a kingdom could there be than the bloody war?

In response to the reactions against the old liberal theology and the destructive effects of both World Wars and their aftermaths, liberal churchman restructured their system of belief and reworded their rejection of orthodoxy. They proceeded upon the very same premise—the rejection of the Bible as the only absolute and infallible rule of faith—but they attempted to redress their unbelief in such a way that it would be more acceptable to the masses and more orthodox-sounding. The Biblical and orthodox doctrines essential to the faith are just as much repudiated as ever, but the repudiation is couched in such a clever disguise that it often goes unnoticed. Liberalism is not dead! Liberal churchmen have not been converted to the orthodox faith! They have only done what liberals have always prided themselves in being able to do—fit their message to the times. The liberal establishment which spearheads the mad drive for a monstrous world church is no more orthodox now than it has ever been. Through a deceitful game of semantic delusion it is seeking to sell the public a thoroughly heterodox

bill of goods. And what is sadly true is that multitudes of laymen are being persuaded to buy the product. Most of them are not aware of the fact that their purchase will ultimately involve the surrender of whatever remains of their church's liberties and aligns them, whether they like it or not, with those men and movements which are diametrically opposed to the faith once delivered unto the saints—the faith of our fathers.

Concerned Christians should not be deceived into thinking that the builders of the proposed ecumenical church are without a plan and program. They are by no means without a detailed blueprint by which they propose to reach their goal. Of course, the general public must not know that when the liberal plan is fully realized the present form of church life as to its doctrine, mission and ministry will be completely restructured. Dr. Colin W. Williams, Executive Director of the Department of Evangelism of the National Council of Churches of Christ and Chairman of the Department of Studies in Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, has prepared a brochure entitled *Where in the World* which outlines rather clearly the hostility of the ecumenists toward the present form of the local church. The concept of the local church which approves it being centered around the homes of the members who worship in a building dedicated to that purpose and who are shepherded by an ordained minister is considered by Williams as "morphological fundamentalism." The concept of the church as the proclaimer and protector of truth must be replaced by a new concept which puts the church in dialogue with the world. Even more than that, it is contended that "the world should write the agenda" for the church. Such a concept is alto-

gether foreign to the New Testament which calls upon the church to bear a witness to the world which is lost and under the curse of God.

The basic problem of the rejection of the inspiration and authority of the Bible which plagued the founders of liberal theology and was embraced by the attempt of church union from the very beginning, still characterizes the present ecumenical leadership. The doctrine that the Bible is the inspired and inerrant Word of God is rejected by them. *Unity trends*, edited by the Department of Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches in consultation with the Roman Catholic Bishops Committee of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs published a report which was also accepted by the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission which clearly repudiated the doctrine of the full and final authority of the Bible. The September 15, 1968 issue of *Unity Trends* stated: "The Bible is in many of its parts the product of historical process. It came into being through historical events and experiences and through reflection upon them. Traditions and writings were handed down in Israel and in the Early Church, and were often in the course of long periods combined, reworked and reinterpreted in the light of later historical situations. The Bible contains a collection of very diverse literary traditions, the contents of which often stand in tension with one another." This same document maintains that the Bible contains "unhistorical" and "unauthentic" elements.

This rejection of the historic orthodox position and the witness of the Bible to its own inerrancy and authority has been the background and continues to be the basis of the modern drive for church union.

THE DANGER OF SUPER-INTELLECTUALISM

Along with the false teaching, which are world wide is the delusion of super-intellectualism. No one can deny that modern scholarship and philosophy are being used to lead people away from the truth of God. The Apostle Paul warns us against these philosophies and dialectical tricks masquerading under the banner of intellectualism. (See Col. 2:8).

Some years ago the New York Times provided a fifty-page brochure of 113 well known books published during the past century. Most of the best sellers were anti-Christian works written by such men as Darwin, Nietzsche, Huxley, Marx, Renan, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell and men of that rationalistic viewpoint. These are the kind of writings which Paul placed in the category where he speaks of being spoiled "through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men." The present-day parading of intellectualism has not only permeated the liberal sphere, but certain conservative areas of Christianity also would have you believe that unless a person has a Doctor of Philosophy degree, he has no right to speak with authority, or to make any significant pronouncements. This is a day when men worship at the shrine of intellectualism.

With present-day priority given to scholarship, we have witnessed an expanding rationalization of the Scriptures, and the scoffing at verbal inspiration of the Bible. More and more the social Gospel is being embraced, and the emphasis is on social action and the betterment of society through education and humanitarianism. The World Council of Churches has repudiated the idea that civilization is

facing the judgment of God. Rather the leaders of the World Council of Churches believe that the Church will build the kingdom through numerous social and idealistic activities. Not long ago a famous professor said, "No thinking man believes in the Eschatology of Jesus." And the writer continued, "We must not only set aside the doctrine of the last things, but the doctrine of the grace of God as well. It has been preached for 1900 years and it has not done the world any good." And this so-called intellectual proceeds to declare that the Gospel must be translated in terms of social and economic panaceas. The center of the humanistic philosophy is a complete reliance in intellectual processes, and a dependence on human ingenuity and capability in charting the whole future course of mankind. Every shade and hue of this modern counterfeit program is designed to obliterate and obscure the cross. Our Lord warned of these conditions during the latter days. With reference to the climactic development He gave us these words, "For as a snare it shall come on all that dwell on the face of the whole earth" (Lk. 21:35). Super-intellectualism is one of the primary methods selected by our adversary in circumventing the Gospel of Redemption made known the the Scriptures. In view of Christ's warning, we may expect the opposition to Biblical revelation will continue to expand until the apostasy becomes universal. Any fair-minded student of contemporary developments must concede that the fulfillment of our Lord's prediction is clearly manifested in the domain of Christendom.

—John E. Dahlin

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Prof. John E. Dahlin

QUESTION . . . When will the cultic activities and the delusions reach their maximum state of expansion?

ANSWER . . . From II Thess. 2:7-12, it is clear that the universal expansion of delusions will come following the Rapture of the Church. The Holy Spirit is now working effectively through the Church and this constitutes the restraining force mentioned by Paul. When this restraining power is removed an avalanche of delusions will sweep over the earth. This will be a worldwide condition during the Great Tribulation. The phenomenal expansion of cultic activity in our time indicates that we are close to this climactic period of History.

QUESTION . . . Is it possible for the Church to overcome the satanic forces which are bringing forth the present great delusions?

ANSWER . . . Nowhere in the Scripture is it pointed out that the Church will successfully overcome the dominion of satan. But through faithful witnessing the followers of Christ are able to win a considerable number to Christ, and in each case when a person is saved, the work of satan is defeated in the life of that individual. God's purpose is "to take out of them (the nations) a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). But so far as the world is concerned, it will remain in ungodliness throughout this age. We read, "And the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 Jn. 5:19). But a very large company of people will be saved through the witnessing activity of the believers during this dispensation.