

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

The
DISCERNER

AN
INTERDENOMINATIONAL
HERESY-EXPOSING
QUARTERLY

Vol. VII

No. 12

2. THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF
MODERN DELUSIONS
6. IT'S NOT THE REAL THING
12. THE ECUMENICAL CULT —BAHAISM
16. LISTINGS FROM OUR CATALOG
16. PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CONTENTS

October - December, 1973

The DISCERNER

Published Quarterly
Price \$1.00 for 4 issues; \$3.00 for 12 issues;
30 cents a copy; for foreign
subscription add 6 cents per issue.
Copyright 1973 by Religion Analysis Service, Inc.
902 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn. 55403
Printed in the United States

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

John E. Dahlin, *Chairman*
Dr. J. Edwin Hartill
Mr. Harold Dainsberg

THE PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE OF MODERN DELUSIONS

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

Much has been written in recent years on the occult phenomena. It is logical that periodicals deal with demonology and witchcraft in view of the extraordinary expansion of these satanic activities in recent years. Many of the articles on these delusions are illuminating, and doubtlessly will serve to awaken people with regard to the seriousness of the present situation. Somehow, very little has been seen in print on the prophetic significance of this kind of diabolical mysticism. To students of end-time events, it has become altogether clear that the occultic expansion is one of the major elements of the apostasy predicted for the final period of this dispensation. It is this writer's conviction that the magnitude of the present-day demon activity reinforces many of the other predictions of the Scriptures pertaining to the latter-days. The rapid expansion of cultic activities ought not to be regarded as some kind of strange co-incidence which might be dismissed as having no particular significance. On the other hand, we should recognize that the composite sphere of delusion is a sign of the times just as unmistakable as other enumerated predictions associated with the end of this age. In the

19th century America, there were only five major cults operating throughout the land. Four of these emerged during the past century, and the fifth had a great renewal within the same period. There may have been a few other minor cultic groups in existence, but their activities were too insignificant for us to attempt to trace. In recent decades, however, cultic groups have had a phenomenal expansion, and without a doubt they number several hundred, and may approach a thousand when all of them are counted. Never in the history of the Church has there been such a multiplication of these off-color groups, or such which have deviated from the sound Biblical doctrines. Obviously, they represent a vary broad spectrum, including those who claim deity for their founders, as well as many other extremists, down to the so-called moderates, who may share a few of the doctrines with Bible-believing people. So far as our knowledge extends, the total number of all those who are identified with the cults in our country are now over 10 million. Many of these groups have witnessed an extra-ordinary growth during the past decade. And, the amount of literature printed and

distributed is nothing less than staggering, and we might add even frightening. It is indicative of the influence of the printed page. Truly one must be naive in attempting to dismiss the current development as being of no particular significance. The plain fact is that daily newspapers give space for long articles on this kind of satanic delusion, which often appear on the front page of these widely circulated publications. Moreover, leading tele-vision networks allow programs to be viewed involving some of the worst elements of occultism. This will have some very disastrous influence upon some of the millions of people who utilize the tele-vision which presents this evil. Protests of responsible Christian organizations are dismissed with a callousness that actually is new in the history of broadcasting. When this kind of recognition is given to these false systems, it serves to provide status or respectability to this type of satanic activity. The deviation from the Scriptural truth is reaching a magnitude which may be associated only with the end of the age. From this introduction let us now proceed to identify the Biblical predictions with reference to the delusions of the latter-days.

THE CLEAR PREDICTIONS OF THE SCRIPTURES

The highest authority of all, our Lord Jesus Christ, offered some distinct predictions with regard to the end-time delusion. "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall rise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, inasmuch that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before" (Mt. 24:11, 24-25). In sev-

eral of his Epistles, Paul refers to the coming delusions, "Now the spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). This prophetic description is precisely what we find in our day. And, in his Second Letter to Timothy, Paul refers to the expanding delusions in these words, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts, shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (II Tim. 4:3,4). Peter, who also offers predictions for the end-times states it as follows: "There shall be false teachers among you, who (secretly) shall bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you; whose judgment now for a long time lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not" (II Pet. 2:3). And in addition, we find that the entire letter of Jude is given over to warn men of the coming apostasy. False teachers are solemnly depicted in this statement: "There should be mockers in the last days, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts" (Jude v. 18). And, in an even broader context, the Apostle Paul points out to the Church of Ephesus the enormous power of the demon domain in these words: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principal-

ties, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). Here we find described the massiveness of the fallen spiritual forces which are operating in the very atmosphere surrounding all human beings. To deny the reality of demon power is to disregard the clear Biblical teachings on the subject. The subsequent verses of this chapter point out the only successful method in meeting this satanic onslaught. The Apostle's exhortation is particularly needed in a day when demon powers are activated for satan's final opposition to God. At the final period of this age, Paul describes the climactic moment in these words: "And then shall the wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming, Even him whose coming is after the working of satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, That they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:8-12). The capstone of this concentration of demon activity is described by John, The Seer, "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of demons working miracles, that go forth unto the kings of the earth and the whole world, to gather

them to battle of that day of God Almighty" (Rev. 16:13-14). We might well say with Peter, "But the end of all things is at hand; be ye, therefore sober-minded, and watch unto prayer" (I Pet. 3:7). The Scriptural position on the end-time delusions is clear as well as illuminating on the subject of demonology.

AN ADDITIONAL IDENTIFICATION OF END-TIME DELUSIONS

Students of modern delusions realize that the enormous expansion of these satanic activities have definite antecedent links. In other words, this phenomena did not come as a bolt from the clear sky. There are a number of contributing reasons for the massiveness of present-day delusions. First, there is a distinct break-down in the historical belief in the authority and infallibility of the Scriptures. This has weakened the conviction among millions of people on issues which were once regarded as absolutely fundamental. Moreover, the ecumenical movement during the past quarter of a century has de-emphasized the importance of Biblical doctrine and the separation of believers from the world. In other words, this has led to a spirit of accomodation along the whole front. In its quest for expansion, the World Council of Churches has been busily engaged in setting aside the earlier standards of conduct held by most of the religious organizations. Such as e.g., divorce, drinking, membership in Secret Societies, worldliness, even homosexuality are practices which have been made quite acceptable within the ecumenical movement. In the National Council of Churches, several of the well known cults have been admitted into membership of

the organization. It seems that expedience has become much more important than Biblical principles within the ecumenical movement. And, in addition, the spirit of permissiveness has been incorporated particularly in our public educational institutions. The warped philosophy of John Dewey, which was introduced in the beginning of this century, has permeated the educational philosophy of the country. In other words, this pragmatic concept has been given the priority. Expedience, rather than principle, is now the dominant position being taken. The idea of discipline along with a directive pattern in education has been abandoned. This, in turn, has very nearly detached a whole generation from the historic moorings, which earlier had rested largely on a Biblical foundation. When you couple this with the ongoing emphasis of the materialistic things, then you have an almost total secular outlook in life. These conditioning influences, over many decades, have brought about a kind of whirlwind, giving momentum to the evil forces which were waiting for an opportunity to enter the arena. Add to this, the craze in drugs and you have a fertile field for the evil of occultism. Pastor Larry Carrier, in an earlier article which appeared in *The Discerner*, points out that 2,000 newspapers in the United States carry the daily horoscope. And he continues by stating It is a well known fact that millions of Americans through their general lack of discernment keep ten thousand "professional" astrologers in bread, butter, and Cadillacs. Look magazine in August, 1971 reported that August LeVey's Church of satan lists ten thousand screened members. It is

also well to point out that the drug abuse and satan worship, as well as everything within the sphere of the occult, has contributed to the unprecedented violence during the past decade. Dr. Kurt Koch's book, *The Devil's Alphabet*, points out clearly the enormous evil, which enters the arena, in the wake of occultism. Numerous examples demonstrate that occultism has a disastrous effect upon those who tamper with a practice which is forbidden in the Scriptures. Occult practices are specifically named by God in His Word and categorically condemned (Deut. 18:9-13; Is. 8: 19-20; 47:11-14).

It is not too difficult for us to reach sound conclusions regarding the end of the age, and the imminence of our Lord's Return, when we give careful consideration to the fulfillment of the many predictions which are recorded in the New Testament. All of the writers make it clear that the age will end in a very great apostasy. The present-day expansion of these satanic activities cannot be denied as they are attaining world-wide dimensions. The people who still entertain the hope of a final breakthrough for the Church, and a world-wide revival as the age draws to a close, have not done their homework in the study of the prophetic Scriptures. Of course many people will be saved even up to the final period, and doubtlessly many local victories will be experienced for believers who are banded-together in witnessing for Christ. It is unfortunate that these limited spiritual victories are often considered as indicative of a broad and far-reaching revival. Our Lord made a distinct statement about conditions here on earth in conjunction with the time of His re-

turn. His words are given in the form of a question, "When the Son of Man Cometh shall He find Faith on earth?" (Lk. 18:8). And, very solemnly in another passage, He placed the end-time situation in a situation as follows: "For like a snare shall it come on all them that dwell upon the face of the earth" (Lk. 21:35). Indeed, there seems to be very little awareness on the part of most people that satan's greatest effort in deceiving the masses is made during this generation. During this time of confusion and a general breakdown of religious beliefs, it is obvious that satan will be able to

influence millions in moving into his orbit. The magnitude of present-day delusions demonstrates that the Biblical predictions are being fulfilled in a way that is nothing less than amazing. It is clear to this writer that this particular area of prophecy is being given entirely too little consideration in our time. When one seeks to evaluate all the current developments, it is certain that we have witnessed "the beginning of the end." It is exceedingly important that we are among those who are able to rightly interpret the developments which we witness in this generation.

IT'S NOT THE REAL THING

A Study of Seventh-day Adventism

by Harold J. Berry

William Miller, a Baptist minister, was a zealous Bible student who yearned for the return of the Lord. As he studied the Scriptures he interpreted Daniel 8:14 to mean that Christ was to return sometime between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. Thousands who had accepted his teaching waited eagerly during this time for the return of the Lord, but they saw no evidence of His return. A new date—October 22, 1844—was set by some, but again the date passed without the appearance of the Saviour.

Disheartened, William Miller declared that he and his followers had been wrong. Before he died in 1849, he said, "We expected the personal coming of Christ at that time; and now to contend that we were not mistaken is dishonest. We should never be ashamed frankly to confess our errors. I have no

confidence in any of the theories that grew out of the movement . . ." (*History of the Advent Message*).

Ellen G. White—who with her husband, Elder James White, was a part of the date-setting movement in 1843 and 1844—became the prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. (The name, Seventh-day Adventists, is derived from the cult's observing Saturday as the day of rest and also from the cult's emphasis on the advent of Christ.) Her writings are considered to be "inspired counsel" on the Scriptures. The leaders of the movement do not teach that Ellen G. White was inspired in the same sense as the authors of the Scriptures, yet for all practical purposes the difference lies only in the terms they use to describe her writings. With few exceptions, the Seventh-day Adventists follow Mrs.

White's teachings with as much preciseness as they follow the teachings of the Bible.

It has been said that the Seventh-day Adventists have changed their beliefs from what Ellen G. White originally taught. But her book, *The Great Controversy*, which sets forth many of her strange beliefs, is still referred to by the Seventh-day Adventists as "one of our standard books" (*Questions on Doctrine*).

INVESTIGATE JUDGMENT

A basic doctrine of the Seventh-day Adventists is the teaching that Christ, as part of His atoning work, has been conducting an "investigative judgment" in the heavenly sanctuary since 1844. This doctrine was formulated after Christ failed to return, as had been predicted, on October 22, 1844. The next day, it suddenly occurred to one of the group—Hiram Edson—"that instead of our High Priest coming out of the [His] Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, he for the first time entered on that day the [His] second apartment of that sanctuary and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth" ("Life and Experience" by Hiram Edson as cited in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* by Le Roy Froom).

That Christ's investigative judgment in the heavenly sanctuary is considered to be a part of His atoning work in Adventist doctrine is seen from such statements as "Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us, we should seek to become perfect in Christ" (*The Great Controversy*). To claim that Christ is presently

doing something to complete His work of redemption is to disregard the words He uttered from the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30). The Greek tense employed in this verse indicates something that had been completed and remained so. A literal translation is: "It has been finished." Also, Hebrews 10:12 clearly indicates that the atoning work of Christ has been completed: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Christ finished His work of redemption on the cross, and nothing needs to be added to it.

In *The Great Controversy*, Ellen G. White explains the investigative judgment that Christ is supposedly conducting at this time: "As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life" (*The Great Controversy*).

It is scriptural to state that a person must place his faith in Christ for the forgiveness of his sin, but it is not scriptural to say that anyone who has sins they have not repented of will have their names

blotted out of the Book of Life. Jesus Christ completely paid the penalty for sin—past, present and future—and He has said that anyone who believes on Him “shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). If, after receiving Christ as Saviour, one commits a sin, he is not in danger of having his name blotted out of the Book of Life if he does not repent of it. Confession of sin after salvation is necessary to maintain fellowship with the Father but not to retain salvation—the salvation question has already been settled.

A faith-plus works type of salvation is revealed in Mrs. White's words: “As they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life.” According to the Scriptures, character does not determine one's character. It is not until a person receives Jesus Christ as Saviour and becomes a “new creature” (II Cor. 5:17) that he can have a character which pleases God. Such a person is Christ's “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). But there cannot be good works which please God until a person has salvation by receiving Christ as Saviour.

The Scriptures speak of individuals being judged, but the time of these judgments are in the future, not at present. Those who know Jesus Christ as Saviour will someday “appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). However, this is a

judgment for rewards, not to determine salvation. Only those who have salvation will appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. All who do not have salvation will appear before the Great White Throne to have their works evaluated and then will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

SATAN—THE SIN BEARER

Not only do the Seventh-day Adventists teach that sin is not fully atoned for as yet but they also teach that Satan has a part in the bearing of our sins.

Writing in *The Great Controversy* about the sin offering and the scapegoat of Leviticus 16, Ellen G. White says, “As the priest, in removing the sins from the sanctuary, confessed them upon the head of the scape goat, so Christ will place all these sins upon Satan, the originator and instigator of sin . . . Satan, bearing the guilt of all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit . . . will at last suffer the full penalty of sin in the fires that shall destroy all the wicked.”

Mrs. White taught that as the priest symbolically took the sins from the people and placed them on the scapegoat in Leviticus 16, so also Christ's death removed the sins from the people and will later place them on Satan. The Scriptures teach that Christ bore the full penalty of our sins because He became the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins and for the sins of the whole world (I John 2:2). Those who refuse to receive Christ as their sin-bearer will suffer everlasting punishment because of their rejection of Him (Luke 13:5; John 3:18, 19; Matt. 25:46). Speaking of Christ, Isaiah 53:6, 12 states: “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity

of us all . . . He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

In His agonizing hours on the cross, Christ was actually "made . . . to be sin for us" (II Cor. 5:21). Since all our sins were placed on Him, we were able to be delivered from all condemnation by receiving Him as our Saviour. Christ did not die to take these sins from us in order to place them on another; He died to suffer the full condemnation for our sins. Satan will be judged for his own sin, but Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (I Pet. 2:24).

ANNIHILATION OF THE WICKED

The Seventh-day Adventists are also firm believers in the annihilation of the wicked—that the wicked will cease to exist and not suffer everlasting punishment. Much of the weight of their teaching is placed upon the beliefs that as a God of love God would not permit anyone to suffer for eternity and that eternal existence is promised only to the Christian.

It is true that God is a God of love—the Scriptures abound with verses that give us this truth (John 3:16; I John 4:7-10; etc.). It is for this very reason that God provided His Son to bear the penalty for our sin so we would not have to suffer condemnation. God has made provision for every person's salvation, but if a person rejects what Christ has accomplished in his behalf, then he will be punished for his own sin.

God's Word clearly reveals that unbelievers will experience everlasting punishment: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). No distinction can be made in this verse

between "everlasting" and "eternal" for they are only different translations of the same Greek word. If the "everlasting punishment" of this verse is to be denied, then logically one must deny the "life eternal" that it proclaims.

Revelation 19:20—20:10 reveals that the wicked do not cease to exist. The two individuals who deceive many during the Great Tribulation are characterized as a beast and false prophet. They are cast into the lake of fire before Christ begins his 1000-year rule on earth. At the end of this 1000 years Satan is also cast into the lake of fire and the beast and false prophet are still there even after a thousand years—they did not cease to exist.

SOUL-SLEEP

Seventh-day Adventists also teach the doctrine of soul-sleep—the belief that there is no conscious existence from the time of death until the resurrection from the dead. They teach that no believer, while living, really has eternal life—for such a quality of life will not be given to him until he declares the possibility of present assurance of salvation (John 5:24; Rom. 10:9; I John 5:11-13).

The Adventists base their teaching of the unconsciousness of the dead on such a statement as "the dead know not any thing" (Eccl. 9:5). It must be remembered that the Book of Ecclesiastes was written from man's viewpoint, not from God's. The writer even says, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (1:2). This book has been included in the canon of Scripture to reveal the hopelessness of life unless it is dedicated to God. Ecclesiastes 9:5 shows that as far as natural man is concerned the grave is the end. But the Scriptures reveal that this

natural view is not correct because judgment occurs after death (Heb. 9:27).

Such Scriptures as Luke 16:22-30; II Corinthians 5:1-8 and Philipians 1:23, 24 show there is a consciousness after death for both believers and unbelievers. First Thessalonians 4:14 also reveals that the Christian goes to be with Christ at death. When Christ comes to rapture the Church, He will bring with Him the believers who have died so they may receive their bodies from the grave.

SABBATH-KEEPING

When most people think of the Seventh-day Adventists, they usually think first of the Adventists' worship on the seventh day of the week—from which practice the group gets part of its name. The Adventists normally make more of an issue of this doctrine than any other. Our greatest concern is not that they desire to worship on a different day but that they make the keeping of this day a criterion of a person's relationship with the Lord—even as to his salvation.

In a letter in *Present Truth* James White wrote, "The keeping of the fourth commandment is all-important present truth; but this alone, will not save any one. We must keep all ten of the commandments, and strictly follow all the directions of the New Testament, and have living, active faith in Jesus. Those who would be found ready to enter the saints' rest, at the appearing of Christ, must live wholly, WHOLLY for Jesus now" (Cited in *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* by Le Roy Froom).

In their literature the reader will find it stressed over and over that the Adventists believe salvation to be by faith in Christ. However, to

this belief in Christ they add their works of the law. This is the same error for which Paul condemned the Galatians. Seventh-day Adventism is 20th-century Galatianism, and the Book of Galatians needs to be studied carefully to see the proper relationship of the law to salvation. Paul condemned those who were teaching a Gospel of faith plus works (Gal. 1:8).

Salvation cannot be by both faith and works. Ephesians 2:8, 9 makes this clear. Romans 11:6 shows it is impossible for anything to be obtained by both faith and works because one excludes the other. The Word of God teaches that salvation can only be obtained by faith in Christ—apart from the works of the law (Rom. 3:21-24). A person produces good works *because* he has everlasting life—not in order to obtain it.

If a person does not keep the seventh day of the week holy then it is obvious to the Adventists that he is not deserving of everlasting life. In fact they believe this so strongly that during the Great Tribulation, they believe, "Sunday-keeping" will be the mark of the beast. The Seventh-day Adventists accept the statement of Ellen G. White: "Sunday-keeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath. The time will come when this day will be the test, but that time has not come yet" (*The Great Controversy*).

The Sabbath was given as a token of the covenant between God and Israel (Ex. 31:16, 17). Sabbath-keeping has never been commanded of the Gentiles and with the setting aside of Israel came also the setting aside of God's token with them—the Sabbath.

The New Testament teaches that for the Body of Christ, the Church, the special days of the Old Testament were only a type of things to come. Therefore, believers are not to let anyone judge them "in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (Col. 2:16, 17). The Old Testament rest of the Sabbath Day was only a picture of the rest that one enters when he places his faith in Christ and ceases from his own works (Heb. 4:9-12).

In commemoration of the day upon which Christ rose from the grave, the New Testament Christians met for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:6, 7). Paul also instructed the Corinthian Christians to set aside their offerings on the first day of the week for the work of the Lord (I Cor. 16:2). These practices were not performed in order to merit salvation. They were performed because the individuals knew Christ as their Saviour, and they wanted to fellowship together around the things of the Lord. It was also their purpose to use offerings to help other Christians and to take the Gospel to those who had not yet received Christ as Saviour.

The distinctive doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are not normally presented on their radio and television programs. Many people listen to the radio program "The Voice of Prophecy" and view the telecast "Faith for Today" without realizing these are Seventh-day Adventist programs.

After one begins to receive their literature he becomes aware of the differences between their teaching and that of the Word of God.

Christians should know what books are published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When in doubt, a person should check who the publisher of the book is. Three of the major publishing houses for Seventh-day Adventist literature are: Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California; Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C.; and Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, Tennessee.

Certain evangelical leaders have endorsed the Seventh-day Adventists as "fellow evangelicals." But their teaching about the investigative judgment and Satan's part in the bearing of sin is sufficient to show that the Seventh-day Adventist gospel is different than the Gospel taught by the Scriptures. Because of their deviation from Scriptures, the Seventh-day Adventists cannot be called evangelicals. This does not mean that every person in the Seventh-day Adventist movement is unsaved. Any person who trusts Christ *alone* for salvation has eternal life, regardless of his religious affiliation. However, it is regrettable that most of those in this movement are blind to the Galatianism which their church teaches and which has never been renounced by its leaders.

Reprinted by permission from the Good News Broadcaster, Copyright © 1973 by the Good News Broadcasting Association, Inc.

BACK ISSUES OF THE DISCERNER

We have available back Issues of *The Discerner* at the following prices: The last 12 Issues at .25¢ each; 12 previous Issues to that at .15¢ each. All other Issues at .10¢ each. These are sent in bundles of 10 or more to any one address. Postage will be added to the price of the above Issues mailed.

THE ECUMENICAL CULT —BAHAISM

By Dr. Ernest Pickering

President, Baptist Bible College, Clarks Summit, Pa.

There is a general fascination everywhere today with things ecumenical. The swift rise and large influence of advocates of one church and one world have served to advance the idea that denominations are sinful and that religiously, the only hope for the world, lies in the creation of a unified church. Since this feeling is very popular at the present hour, it is not surprising that a cult would seize upon it as one of the main thrusts of their teaching. Such a cult is the Bahai Faith.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1844, a young Persian announced that he was the forerunner of an important religious figure and assumed for himself the title of "Bab", meaning "gate". His teachings were opposed by leaders in Islam and he was killed in 1850. In 1863 a follower of the Babi Faith in its early unfoldings, Mirza Husayn 'Ali, proclaimed himself as the great Prophet of whom the Bab had spoken and took the title, "Baha'ullah", meaning "The Glory of God". His followers became known as the "Bahais", or "Followers of The Glory". The writings of Baha'ullah are revered as the scriptures in the Bahai Faith. They are looked upon as the Word of God.

Upon the death of Baha'u'llah in 1892, his successor became 'Abdu'l-Baha, his eldest son. Under his direction the Bahai Faith was introduced to Europe and America and the Bahais became quite missionary-minded. 'Abdu'l-Baha died in 1921 and left a will naming his

eldest grandson, the late Shoghi Effendi, as the leader of the cult. Since Shoghi Effendi's death in 1957, the cult has been governed by a group of twenty-seven leaders called the "Hands of the Cause".

GENERAL FACTS CONCERNING THE BAHAI FAITH

As has been noted, the roots of this cult lie in Persian Mohammedanism. However, the cult does not emphasize this fact since their major appeal is as a gathering place for all who wish to worship God. Certain basic principles are enunciated by this cult as being the very foundation of their beliefs. They are as follows:

1. The oneness of mankind.
2. The common foundation of all religions.
3. The independent investigation of truth.
4. Religion and science as integral parts of one truth.
5. Equality of men and women.
6. Elimination of prejudice of all kinds.
7. Universal compulsory education.
8. Spiritual solution of the economic problem.
9. A universal language.
10. Universal peace guaranteed by a world government.

The student will immediately be struck with the emphasis upon "oneness" in religious, social, economic and political realms. Someone has rightly said that "no cult bears a gospel better suited to the temper of our times than the Bahai".

What is the main purpose of the Bahai Faith? One of their writers declares it is a "new spiritual approach which will at once reconcile the basic contradictions in major religious beliefs, be consistent with modern scientific and rational principles, and offer to all peoples a set of values and a meaning to life that they can accept and apply". (Bahai: World Faith for Modern Man", Arthur Dahl). This is certainly quite an ambitious undertaking! To reconcile all the major religions of the world is a monumental task. The assumption of such a responsibility will certainly guarantee the Bahai Faith plenty of work in the future!

As an outward expression of the principles of their faith the Bahais have erected a magnificent temple in Wilmette, Illinois, near Chicago. At a cost of more than two and a half million dollars and over a period of twenty-three years this ninesided edifice was erected. Each Bahai house of worship is required to have nine sides since they view the number nine, the largest single numeral, as the number of completeness. The Wilmette Temple has attracted international interest due to its size and architectural beauty. The Bahais have capitalized on this interest to spread their faith. The structural lines of the temple are calculated to represent certain principles of the cult, chiefly its emphasis on the unity of all religions. Illustrated brochures and booklets explaining this may be obtained.

The Bahais repudiate any professional "clergy" as such. They feel their teachings are best propagated by the people themselves. They do have administrative and religious leaders who are elected by a democratic process.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE BAHAIS

The Bahais believe in God, but not the supreme, holy, and sovereign God that Christians worship. Their doctrine of God is tinged with Oriental philosophy and presents the composite that any idea of God would possess which is a mixture of men's ideas concerning Him. Doctrinally the Bahai Faith is a big blur, a mixture of theological paints on one canvass. As such it appeals to many moderns who have little time for exact doctrine or dogmatic belief. No doubt for this reason perhaps more than for any other the Bahais have gone forward in recent years.

Has God revealed himself: This is an important question. If He has revealed Himself, where, when, and how has He done so? According to the Bahai Faith, God is progressively revealing Himself and will continue to do so. They have applied the evolutionary principle to the matter of revelation and find God constantly revealing Himself through the major religions of the world and their accredited spokesmen. Thus Buddha, Zoroaster, Moses, Christ, and Muhammed are true prophets of God. The Bahais refer to them as "Manifestations of God". No orthodox Christian could accept such a view because the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, not only claimed to be God, the only true and living God, but He authenticated His claims by His Teachings, His miracles, His authority, and, ultimately, by His resurrection from the dead. To place the Lord Jesus on a par with the founders of "other religions" is utter blasphemy. Of course Bahais repudiate strongly the claims of anyone to absolute truth. They see truth as a composite of the various teachings of men rath-

er than as a final revelation from God. Such a view would cause them to reject any claim of Christ to superiority over other religious teachers, and certainly any claim to finality and infallibility. But one cannot be a Christian in the New Testament sense without accepting these facts.

All cults, without exception, are in error concerning the Person of Christ. They also err in regard to the purpose of His coming. The Bahais see Christ only as a great teacher. The concepts of His miraculous birth, His perfect life, and especially His atoning death are foreign to them. They see no saving efficacy in His death, and, indeed, their entire system has no place for the New Testament doctrine of the blood and the satisfaction that was wrought through the shedding of that blood. Bahais are interested in moralisms not regeneration; enlightening teaching, not atoning suffering, and moral social uplift rather than justification by faith.

No realistic doctrine of sin is set forth by this cult. The tone of their message is moralistic rather than evangelistic. Men come to know God through knowledge, through teaching, and not through repentance and faith. This is, of course, in sharp contrast to the New Testament emphasis upon the necessity of the new birth and a personal faith in Jesus Christ. Men are not saved by accepting Christ as a Teacher, but by trusting Him as a Saviour. The Bahais have skillfully stripped their message of the offensive note of original sin, total depravity, and the necessity for repentance in favor of something far more appealing to human nature—the moral renovation by learning.

A high standard of moral con-

duct is emphasized. Faithfulness to the marriage vows and chaste conduct in all relationships are laws of the Bahais. Alcohol and narcotics are forbidden except when prescribed by a doctor. Virtues such as honesty, generosity, and truthfulness are held in high esteem. Many are impressed with this aspect of the Bahai Faith, being either ignorant, or wilfully neglectful of the fact that a moral life apart from a changed heart is mere hypocrisy in the sight of a holy God.

While they claim to believe in the immortality of the soul, Bahais reject the teaching of the Word of God regarding the after life. There is no literal heaven or hell, but after death the soul is launched into another "plane of existence", progressively learning more and more about God. The cult at this point smacks of Oriental philosophy and pagan thought.

One of the main "selling points" of the cult is its earthiness, its concern with the social problems of mankind, and its desire to bring about social progress for the entire human race. This slant came largely as a result of the infection of Baha'u'llah with western ideas, and with the gradual development in his mind of the concept that a universal religion (as opposed to an eastern-oriented religion) might have more appeal in the West. In its earliest forms, the teaching of the Bahais in and around Baghdad (which was still their center) incorporated the thought that Baha'u'llah (the successor to Th Bab) was divine and his teachings were to be accepted as final and authoritative. Being a pragmatic soul, and wishing to succeed as a religious leader and spread influence as widely as possible, Baha'u'llah

realized that to present the figure of an absolute religious leader demanding obedience of his followers and winning allegiance of the world by the sword (the original position of the early Bahais), might be far less attractive than to present a religion with a human approach and a broad spirit of love and tolerance. Bahaism, therefore, became "westernized" to the disgust of some of the more orthodox.

Upon the death of Baha'u'llah, there was a struggle for the mantle of leadership and Abdu'l-Baha, mentioned earlier, became the leader. His education had been partly western, and he was besides an efficient organizer. During his regime Bahaism adapted itself even more to modern social ideas and developed many of its present characteristics.

The practical aspects of the teachings of Bahaism very closely resemble the aims and purposes of many modern politicians, sociologists, and other leaders. At the top of the list is their desire for a federated world government, supported by a world court and a world police force. An international language is also advocated. All war must be abolished and mankind's problems solved by peaceful means. Extremes of wealth and poverty must be prevented (a goal of socialists of all stripes), and everyone given equal opportunities. They speak against race prejudice in any form, promote a scientific approach to religion, and desire a program of universal education. The popularity of these aims in the minds of a world enamored with the "international spirit" to-

day insures a ready-made audience for the Bahai Faith.

Shoghi Effendi, late leader of the cult and one of its prolific writers, detailed the coming "utopia" on earth in one his works, *The Unfoldment of World Civilization*. He mentioned world unity as the ultimate goal of mankind. He noted that such unity would include a world commonwealth in which all races and nations would be united. This commonwealth would be ruled over by a world legislature which would control the resources of the member nations and legislate for the entire world. A world executive would carry out the decisions of this legislature, backed by the authority of a world court and an international police force. Religious strife, racial and national animosities, and human intrigues would be ended. In their place would come a world federal system, "exercising unchallengeable authority". Economic balance and social justice will prevail.

Such a picture is not unfamiliar to the student of the Bible, but the Bahais and their teachings will never produce it. Only the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven can bring peace and justice to a sinful world. He will do so when He comes again. The Bahais have substituted human efforts, thoughts, schemes, and plans for the divine plan: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:6).

Bahaism is an Oriental humanism, a socialistic pipe dream, and a system contrary to the revealed Word of God.

Reprinted from the *Discerner*, published by the Religion Analysis Service, 902 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis, Minn. 55403.

RELIGION ANALYSIS SERVICE, INC.
902 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55403

Address Correction Requested

PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Prof. John E. Dahlin

QUESTION . . . What is specifically distinct now about delusions in contrast to the situation in an earlier generation?

ANSWER . . . A careful study of cultic movements in previous decades indicates that the occult phenomena was very limited in its operation. The well known cults generally dominated the sphere of delusions. Recently we have witnessed an unprecedented expansion of satan worship, demonism, witchcraft and astrology. These evils were present in earlier periods, but they had not come as an avalanche until recent years.

QUESTION . . . What are the best means for Christians in coping with the evil of occultism?

ANSWER . . . Paul points out how satanic activities may best be met. He writes, "Put on the whole armour of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." It means we must possess a thorough knowledge of the Word of God that sets forth the great doctrines which govern our life and conduct. Each person needs the fulness of the Spirit of God in order to receive enlightenment concerning the truth over against error. The best method that is available is the Apostle's exhortation in Eph. 6:12-15.

SOME RECENT ADDITIONS TO OUR STOCK OF BOOKS

1. **THE ARMSTRONG ERROR**—De Loach. The Armstrongs are in error. If you do not understand where, read this book. \$.95.
2. **CHRISTIAN SCIENCE**—Hoekema. The chapter from Chaos Of The Cults have "good news". Read what Satan is. \$.60.
3. **NEW GODS IN AMERICA**—Rowley. Some of the gods presenting themselves in today's youth. Not a bed-time story. \$.695.
4. **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM**—Hoekema. What does the Bible Say? \$1.75.
5. **LETTERS TO TERESA**—Samuel Fisk. Letters to one Inclined Toward the Roman Catholic Church, recently published—excellent. \$1.95.
6. **MORMONISM**—Hoekema. Another chapter from Chaos Of The Cults. \$.75.
(Add 15% for mailing charges on orders up to \$10.00)