

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

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ARE THERE ANY PREVENTATIVES TO THE INROADS OF THE CULTS?

By Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

It is time that someone among those who have studied and written on cultic groups for years present some approach other than pointing out the errors of their systems. An enormous amount of literature has been printed on numerous groups which have deviated from the truth. It is urgent, I believe, that we come to grips with reality, that is, setting forth ways by which we may curtail the number who are being ensnared yearly by the cultists. The old saying is apropos: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Before such an objective can be reached, it is necessary that we are informed and convinced of the immensity of the inroads of these false groups in our country. It is conservatively estimated that over 1,300 such groups are active, and that possibly fifteen million people are now ensnared by the cults. Their program of brain-washing people, and the deceptive recruiting techniques they use, must be understood before we are able to find the proper antidote. In addition, we need to know the

financial aggrandizement of these self-styled prophets and religious charlatans. These spurious groups often are headed by leaders who have been disenchanted with institutional religion, and have become determined to inflict society with their ego-satisfying systems. All groups under the classification of cults represent aberrations from Biblical Christianity.

The New Testament provides a distinct identification of cultists, particularly those appearing in the latter days. The apostle Paul points out clearly their appearance, "The Spirit speaketh expressly that, in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:1-2). And, in his Second Letter to Timothy he continues, "Evil men shall become worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). Peter uses equally strong language in dealing with those who deviate from the truth, "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. Many shall follow their pernicious ways by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through their covetousness shall they with feigned words, make merchandize of you . . ." (II Peter 2:1-3).

These are solemn statements from two of the inspired writers of the New Testament. We simply must not underestimate the cunningness and the determination of the cultists of our time. Once this fact is established, we will be motivated to do something constructively to help many of our fellowmen who are being ensnared by false teachings.

In our preliminary consideration of the threat of the cultists, it is also well to mention that the adversaries have targeted the human minds for their attacks. Paul refers to such people in these words: "There are some that trouble you and would pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:7). This statement has also been rendered, "Those who unsettle your minds by trying to distort the Gospel of Christ." Both Scripture and current evidence indicate that even Christian people are vulnerable to the inroads of those who practice mind-control. A fine Christian mother came to our office for literature, and with tears in her eyes, she said, "What wrong have we done as parents that this should happen to our children?" Indeed, they had been reared in a normal

Christian environment in their parental home, yet certain members of the family were influenced by those who propagate error. One cannot always point to the particular area where parents have failed. The prophet Jeremiah refers to such a situation, "Those that I have cared for and brought up hath mine enemy consumed" (Lam. 2:22). The young people seem to be the primary target of those who seek to victimize them by capturing their minds through their clever techniques. We must recognize that sons and daughters who have reached their maturity in years may choose a different course from that which they have been taught in the home.

Renewed Emphasis on Bible Doctrine Needed

If we are to succeed in a preventative program, it is necessary that priority be given to Bible doctrine in all our organized Christian activities. The superficial knowledge by many people of that which the Bible teaches is a tragedy of our time. Several leading denominations have de-emphasized Biblical doctrines for decades, and numerous local churches have failed to teach the fundamentals of the Scriptures. Bible-believing groups must match the zeal of cultic propagandists by initiating a renewed program of effectively teaching the basic doctrines of the Word of God. In fact, we should be able to do as Peter states it so well, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (I

Pet. 3:15). The church should be both willing and able to educate its constituents in Biblical doctrine. Not only ought this matter be emphasized from the pulpit, but is also is important that it be carried out in every department of the local church. After 25 years as the director of Religion Analysis Service, I have been impressed by the fact that churches which provide doctrinal teaching lose very few of their people to the cults. And, as a pastor for many years I have found the effectiveness of doctrinal preaching and teaching in keeping people firmly committed to the Scriptural position. When a deficiency of such teachings exists anything can happen to people who are uninformed when they are confronted by the clever cultic propagandists. In fact, it leaves such people wide open for false teachings. On the other hand, the cultists are not likely to waste time on those who demonstrate a firm faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and who have a solid knowledge of the Scriptures. Indeed, doctrinal teachings constitute the core of our preventative methods in combatting all forms of error.

Providing Information on Cultic Groups

It is imperative that people in all our churches are informed regarding the techniques and practices of the spurious movements. They are actively engaged in their unscriptural work in practically every community in our land. How might we curtail their program of ensnaring the people? First of all, it

is important that we introduce a series of studies covering at least the leading cults of our time. This should be continued as often as needed within the congregation. These studies may be arranged in the adult departments of the Sunday School over a certain number of Sundays, or they may be held at the regular services of the church. At my conferences each year (mostly on Prophecy), I have arranged to speak to all the adults in the Sunday School at a general session. Usually this includes the junior-senior group as well as the other adult classes in the Sunday School. These sessions have been informative and helpful. At each place which I have visited, a table of literature has been made available where those present have selected books and pamphlets on the different cults.

Some time ago most of the churches of a certain city joined in sponsoring a series of studies on the cults. We had both day and evening services. Some morning sessions were as well attended as the evening meetings. The whole community was benefited by information provided on many of the false systems of religion inflicting the people of our country. At these meetings the most important emphasis was on the areas in which the cults deviate and part company with the Bible-believing Christians. By following such a plan people will be provided a greater capability in discriminating between Biblical truth and the errors of the cultists.

My observation has been that many ministers, youth leaders and

Sunday School workers are all too frequently uninformed in these matters, and they fail to understand the real threat of these off-center groups which penetrate the various communities.

In addition, appropriate books, pamphlets and tracts should be secured for the church library so that the people who seek information on particular cults may obtain helpful literature as needed. Personally, I also have available much of this literature in my home, and in my automobile in order to provide enlightenment to people who seek information on these false religious systems. Even when I travel by plane and on the train I carry this kind of literature. Often I have occasion to provide pertinent literature to people with whom I come in contact. Proper literature made available to alert people on the cults will serve as a positive counter activity against the ongoing cultic propagandists at work. If space permitted, I might provide illustrations how these various methods have served as a preventative in checking the tactics of the various cultic groups.

The Present Situation Merits Immediate Attention

Young people during the transition from adolescence to adulthood are frequently searching and exploring methods and means in endeavoring to make their lives count. Often there is a real feeling of insecurity. The cultists feed on this prevailing situation among numerous young people. We have observed how the **Way** and the **Mooney** programs

have succeeded in capturing thousands of young people, who become totally committed to the dominant leaders of these movements. Yes, many young people today are engaged in a search for spiritual reality. If they do not find it in the church, and in a genuine born-again experience, they are often enticed and victimized by these clever cultists. They know how to bend the minds of people and actually bring about a thorough brain-washing program. Unless the existing vacuum is met by a true spiritual ministry of the church, an increasing number of young people will fall prey to these cultic systems which hold forth great promises to the youth. It is a well established fact that the cultists of today concentrate their greatest efforts in ensnaring the youth of our generation.

Never in the history of Christianity has the challenge been greater than now to find preventatives in checking the steady inroads of the cults in our present-day society. Religion Analysis Service is following a constructive counter-program in order to meet the unprecedented need of our time. Literature of high spiritual quality is still the most effective remedy in curtailing the activities of the cults during these perilous days. With your help in providing funds we will continue to do our very best in opposing the cultic groups in our land. Action is needed now, and we ask you to join us in using the preventatives which will rescue many people from the false teachers who are active in every area of the land.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

By Dr. Dave Breese

President of Christian Destiny, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois

Here is another one of the key words of our time. Everyone wants to be liberated from some kind of real or imagined (or contrived) oppression. The word has even grown into a religious form, we call it "the theology of liberation."

Liberation theology has grown to rather large proportions in Latin America and is now touching many naive evangelicals in North America. Because you will soon hear of it (perhaps even from your church pulpit), we should take a moment to understand what this interesting new call to Christian liberation is all about.

IT'S ABOUT MONEY! Oppression is not having enough money. Sin is to have more money than someone else. Evangelism is to take money from the rich and give to the poor (while retaining, of course, a fair percentage for services). Consecration is to be—or appear—poor, and private wealth is the essence of iniquity.

IT'S ABOUT POLITICS. America is the oppressor, comparable to Egypt of old. "The Third World" is the oppressed, like the Children of Israel in that day of the house of bondage in Egypt. Russia is the ideal, the anticipated perfect society, like the promised land of Canaan. Marx and Lenin are the liberators, like Moses, like (shall I say it?) Jesus.

IT'S ABOUT RELIGION. Christ is the liberator and, if He were here now, would take up arms against the establishment like He did against the money changers. Communion has become "the bread of the workers" and salvation is to be liberated into the blessings of the socialist world revolution. The Christian life is to relate to the poor and oppressed, and witnessing is to tell the impoverished of their enslavement by capitalism and promise the economic freedom that comes through revolution.

IT'S ABOUT MISSIONS. It sings glad songs as "Christ for the Worker"

and "The Christ of the Sugar Cane Fields." Its story to tell to the nations is that of world liberation from capitalist oppression and the new freedom of the socialist world revolution. Salvation is "holistic" (whatever that means), implying social liberation, physical freedom and sweet relationalism as the essence of the Gospel. The Gospel itself is newly defined as "the economic healing of the nations."

This new theology is only Biblical in the sense that the Scriptures say, "In the latter days some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (I Tim. 4:1). It is a new great evidence of the subtle spiritual defection which the Bible promises will come to pass in the last days.

Perceptive Christians therefore will not be fooled by the theology of liberation. They will know that here again Satan is transforming himself into an angel of light and we therefore can expect that some of his ministers will do the same (II Cor. 11:14).

Tragically, all Christians are not up to date in their perceptions about these things. For want of a careful understanding of the Word of God, some have even allowed their leaders, educators and pastors to preach these things without ever raising their voice in objection. Some continue to support missions, schools, publications and organizations which have become "liberated" from the truth of Scripture. The art of deceiving the elect has become refined in our time as new false witnesses expand their efforts in perverting the Gospel of Christ.

We must therefore heed as never

before the warning which the Apostle Paul gave to the Ephesian elders,

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

We must therefore beware of the wolves as never before, and we must look closely, for some of them are wearing sheep's clothing. Some may even indeed be our friends, our children, our trusted former associates. A new generation is coming upon us and some of that generation have forsaken the God of their fathers to embrace a religion called "evangelical Christianity" but which is in fact a counterfeit gospel. Nothing can any longer be taken for granted, for some of the enemy have now slipped inside the walls of the household of faith.

Make no mistake, we Christians are concerned about the heart-breaking needs of many of the people of our world. Pagan lands are an ocean of poverty, disease and death which should move every believer to tears . . . and action. The fact is that no non-government group on earth has done more to alleviate the physical needs of

downtrodden humanity than have evangelical Christians. Ours is a beautiful record of human help which is too often down-played by those who would continue to lay the problems of the world to the charge of God's elect.

The Christian, however, understands that the real problem of the world is that it is lost in sin. Furthermore, he knows that, so long as a man is yet in his sins, all other forms of human aid can be but of temporary succor. Spiritually perceptive Christians therefore in all of the ages of the church have believed that the purpose of human help is to bring a person to the place where he would see his spiritual need and receive Jesus Christ as Savior. We used to call philanthropic activities by Christians "earning the right to preach the Gospel."

Alas, a new day has come upon us. Young humanists within the church have now introduced this new form of theological corruption called liberation theology which could, if it grows unchecked, destroy the spiritual nature of our missionary activity and close the door to eternal life for many. "Laying down your life for the healing of the nations and working for peace and justice is not an implication of the gospel, it is the gospel" says one of them. Such an arrogant perversion of sound doctrine could produce the ruin of the church.

The art of deceiving the elect grows. The church must therefore, at all cost, return to the Gospel and stand inflexibly on the Biblical definition of the Gospel, namely, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (I Cor. 1:3). Here alone is the hope of mankind.

CHRISTIAN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY— A FALSE DOCTRINE

*By Rev. R. Alan Streett, Evangelist and
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I. INTRODUCTION

There is a false teaching being propagated within many evangelical circles that God wants His children to prosper materially. The primary Scriptures used to support this "theory of abundance" are basically Old Testament texts addressed to the nation of Israel and selected passages from the New Testament, namely John 10:10, III John 2 and Luke 6:38.

"... I am come that (ye) might have life and that (ye) might have it more abundantly."

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

This latter-day doctrine is being taught under such headings as "The Blessing Pact", "The Prosperity Plan" and the "Covenant For Successful Living." The premise is that the Christian who gives to God "in faith" will receive, in return, great abundance, including new homes, big automobiles, luxurious yachts and many other of the finer things in life. This teaching was first introduced in the early 1960s by a

well known pentecostal "faith healer", and was later picked up and expanded upon by a host of Fundamental, Evangelical and Charismatic Bible teachers and evangelists. Even the infamous Reverend Ike has "profited" from this concept.

II. THE ERROR

The error of the prosperity theory becomes apparent when the Scriptures supporting it are studied in light of their contexts, according to proper hermeneutic principles, and when compared against other texts dealing with the same topic.

A. New Testament

Passages Examined

The first New Testament text cited, John 10:10, is found in the portion of Scripture known as the "Good Shepherd" discourse. It has absolutely nothing to do with material wealth or prosperity, but rather deals with the SPIRITUAL relationship which exists between Christ and His flock. It specifically treats the matter of the good shepherd laying down his life for the sheep as opposed to the hireling who is unwilling to do so. Here we have a complete misapplication of the passage by the prosperity teachers.

The next text found in III John 2 is written by the Apostle John to his good friend Gaius. In this verse he expresses his "personal" desire

to see Gaius experience physical well-being and material prosperity. According to the noted Greek scholar, Dr. Kenneth Wuest, this was a *common* salutation to be found in most letters written during the first century, pagan as well as Christian. Therefore, in no way does it indicate that God longs to see His children materially rich.

A close examination of the third proof text, Luke 6:38, demonstrates that the statement "Give and it shall be given unto you . . ." has to do with JUDGMENT and FORGIVENESS, not temporal abundance. If you judge, you will be judged; if you forgive, you will be forgiven by others. "For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured unto you again." The context of this passage proves conclusively that material wealth is not in view. (Also read the parallel passage found in Matthew 7:1-3).

It is clear from a careful examination of the key New Testament passages that the texts do *not* support the doctrine of "Christian Prosperity."

B. Christian Hermeneutics and The Old Testament

This brings us to consider the so-called Old Testament scriptural supports, of which there are many. Under the old covenant God made numerous conditional promises to the people of Israel. He promised them land (Genesis 12:1), material prosperity (Exodus 12:25), divine protection (Exodus 13:17-22), physical health (Exodus 15:26), daily provisions (Exodus 16:4) and an abundance of crops (Deuteronomy

12:25), if they met the requirements of the covenant.

A problem arises when one attempts to apply to the Church promises that were exclusively made to the Israelites. A careful study of the Old and New Testaments indicates that God has consistently dealt differently with the Jew than He has with the Church.

His dealings with the nation of Israel have always been "earthly" in nature. For instance, the Jewish people were to worship God in an *earthly* tabernacle through a human priest (Exodus 25). As previously noted, God openly rewarded them with physical, material and temporal blessings. Their future will include an *earthly* millennial kingdom in the land promised to their forefathers (Jeremiah 23:5, 6; Isaiah 11:11, 12; 14:1). The Jewish nation is to be perpetuated through *physical* birth.

The Church, on the other hand, is "spiritual" in nature. Christians are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20; I Peter 1:4). They worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:20-23), without having to go through a human priest (I Peter 2:5). As Christ's Bride, the believers look forward to a future in Heaven (John 14:1-3; I Thessalonians 4:15-17). The Church is perpetuated through *spiritual* birth (John 3:1-8).

The obvious difference shows the danger of taking the earthly promises made to Israel and applying them to the Church. Yet this is exactly what the prosperity advocates practice. Does this mean we are to reject much of the Old

Testament as being irrelevant for the Church age? I think not. The wanderings, successes, failures, and promises made to Israel are recorded for us as examples (I Corinthians 10:6). They offer important lessons for us today. The Church needs to carefully examine these passages and make the proper spiritual applications.

C. A Comparative Examination of Other Texts

Often the abundant living philosophers condemn the Christian who is experiencing material poverty or struggling to make ends meet as "not having enough faith." If the impoverished believer would only give more finances to the Lord, God would honor it and pour back to His faithful servant one-hundred fold. Such reasoning is in complete contradiction to the clear teachings of the Scripture.

You recall when Peter was confronted by the beggar born lame, he responded, "Silver and gold have I none; such as I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). Would the teachers of prosperity wish to classify the Apostle Peter as having little faith?

How would the enthusiastic proponents of successful living handle the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, classically called the "faith" chapter? In verses 37 through 39 are recorded these words:

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being DESTITUTE, af-

flicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in caves of the earth. And these *all*, having obtained a good report through *faith*."

Destitute, but men and women of faith! The Apostle James tells us that God chooses "the poor of this world, rich in faith" to be the inheritors of His kingdom (James 2:5). In verse 6, he admonishes his readers with these words, "But ye have despised the poor." He must have been addressing a group of prosperity advocates!

To the Church at Smyrna, the One who had no place to lay His head (Matthew 8:20), and had to use money from the mouth of a fish to pay the Temple taxes (Matthew 17:27) had this to say:

"I know thy works, and tribulation and POVERTY, (but thou art rich) . . . I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 22:9, 10).

The Church at Smyrna was poor in worldly goods, but rich in spiritual attributes! Contrast this to the Church at Laodicea which boasted, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing . . ." To these Christians the Lord said:

"Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor" (Revelation 3:16).

It becomes clear from a comprehensive study of God's Word that material wealth and prosperity are unrelated to faith and spirituality.

Because believers in Jesus Christ are a heavenly people and not of this world system (John 15:19), they are not to seek after the tem-

poral things the world offers. The Apostle Paul reminded the Roman Christians to "Be not conformed to the world" (Romans 12:2). John, the beloved disciple, gave a similar warning:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:15-17).

Jesus warned His disciples, ". . . Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth He that layeth up treasure for himself . . . is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15, 21).

III. GOD'S PROMISES TO THE CHURCH

While God does not promise His children temporal prosperity, He does promise to meet their material *needs*. As the Church of Jesus Christ we have been commissioned to carry the Gospel to the ends of the world, to heal the brokenhearted and set the captives free. In return for our faithfulness to this mission, God promises to provide us with the *necessities* of life (Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:31-34). Paul, writing to the Philippian Christians, said, "But my God shall supply all your *need* according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Jesus taught us to pray, Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

It is important to remember that necessities are not luxuries; neither is "daily bread" T-Bone steak. But according to His grace God does promise to supply food and raiment; thus, freeing us to serve Him more fully.

The ultimate blessings God has in store for His "heavenly" people are *spiritual* in nature. This world is not our home. One day we will reach our destination and receive our final reward: "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven . . ." (II Peter 1:4).

IV. CONCLUSION

Christians must learn the lesson of the Apostle Paul, to be content regardless of our material state (Philippians 4:12). Think of our brothers and sisters in Vietnam, China, India and the other underprivileged countries of the world, just as faithful as we, who have far less materially.

"But Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (I Timothy 6:6-8).

Jesus said,

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . ." (Matthew 6:19, 20).

To those embracing the false doctrine of prosperity, who reject this advice from the Lord, the Apostle Paul sternly writes,

"But they that wish to be rich fall

into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Timothy 6:9, 10).

The sensational teaching that Christians are to experience "worldly riches" has no Biblical or practical foundation. We have all

known Christians who have given faithfully to the Lord's work above and beyond the tithe who have never received material prosperity in return.

Originally conceived in the mind of an evangelist as a fund raising device, "Christian Prosperity" is based on a misapplication of Scripture, poor exegetical principles and a lack of proper hermeneutic understanding.

COUNTERFEIT RELIGION

Should I stand idly by if I know my friend is about to accept a counterfeit coin or bill?

The fact is that my friend thinks the bill is genuine, but his thinking has no bearing on the fact that he will lose his money.

The counterfeiter must be unmasked!

One who counterfeits \$50 bills would not use clear cellophane to make his money. He would not use purple ink. He would not put a picture of Santa Claus on it. This would make the counterfeit obvious.

The pseudo-Christian movements, likewise, make every effort

to appear genuine. They use our terms. They use Bible passages to support their beliefs. The unsuspecting accept them without question. After all, they appear genuine.

One might recover from the loss if he receives a \$50 bill by mistake, but if he accepts it as genuine, a counterfeit religion, the result is tragic.

The fact that one may "feel" his bill is genuine does not make it so. The fact that one claims a "testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel (Mormonism)" does not make the counterfeit more authentic.

From the Utah Evangel

A TRIBUTE TO MRS. KAY ANDERSEN

A memorial service was held for Mrs. Kay Andersen on February 25th at the First Evangelical Free Church of St. Paul. She has given part-time service in our office for a number of years. Rev. Arthur Ramsland (former pastor), and Secretary of Religion Analysis, was in charge. He expressed appreciation for all her kind deeds and dedicated work to the congregation where she was a member.

Prof. John E. Dahlin, President of Religion Analysis Service, read a statement of tribute for her humble and willing service given to our organization. Since early last summer she was no longer able to come to the office due to declining health. All who knew Kay Andersen appreciated her gentle spirit in serving the Lord. For many years she lived in her Minneapolis home.

THE MISTAKEN POSITION AMONG CULTISTS

The wise man provides a clear insight on the thinking of many self-deluded people. He says, "There is a way that seemeth right but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). The writer has reference to those who believe that their opinions and practices are good. Unfortunately their blind zeal is mistaken to be true dedication to God. Yes, they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last. But the fact of the matter is their end is eternal ruin. One writer has said it very well in these words, "self-deceivers will prove in the end to be self-destroyers."

It does seem right to be continually motivated with zeal and dedication to the work of a religious organization. The apostle Paul describes these people vividly in the statement "they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). Even the Old Testament prophets of Baal manifested a remarkable determination in achieving their objectives during their confrontation with the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel. In an ironic manner the man of God ridiculed the false prophets for their position in calling upon their heathen Gods who were unable to answer the intense supplications which they made. Too often Christian people are misled in ascribing virtues to the cultists due to their complete comital in carrying out the instructions of their leaders. These zealots

often demonstrate an earnestness which is lacking among God's redeemed people. Zeal, when misapplied as we pointed out, has no merit, however. Saul of Tarsus had an intense zeal as a Pharisee, prior to his meeting with Christ on the Damascus road, but he was mistaken in that which he did. The apostle describes this in the review of his past life as a religious leader (Phil. 3:6). His great devotion to the task led him to persecute the early Christians. Zeal in itself, if it is detached from the knowledge of the grace of God through Christ, actually is worthless. This is exactly what Paul points out in the overview of his early life. We must not attribute the eagerness of the cultists in their service as being synonymous with the spiritual dedication in serving the Lord. What has been now stated harmonizes completely with the text quoted at the outset of this presentation.

In our further analysis of the subject, it also should be stated that it *seems right* in being continually *active in a religious organization*. This is a mistaken viewpoint, however. It is a known fact that many of such groups have deviated from the Scriptural base. We find during Christ's ministry that His chief controversy was with the religious spokesmen of his day. In other words, they did not escape his rebuke because they were the main leaders in the

religious life of the nation. To no other group was his disapproval and condemnation presented so strongly as to them. Listen to his words: "Woe unto you for you have taken away the key of knowledge; ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering ye have hindered" (Luke 11:52). What is the important lesson from the Lord's statement? Clearly it is suggested that we should not accept prominent religious groups as being genuine simply because they lift high the spiritual banner. It is completely true from Christ's words that when religion is falsely applied, it creates a great hindrance to those who proclaim the truth of God.

And, it *may seem right* when the *Mormon and the Jehovah's Witnesses* come to your doors seeking to interest you in a religious discussion. The early Christians also went from house to house in seeking to gain converts. These modern emissaries appear earnest and anxious to be helpful to the people in their approach. But they (as well as many other cultists) are deceivers and false propagandists who seek to ensnare people in their false teachings. Casually considered, it may seem that they are seeking to do good, but the opposite is true. The wise man makes it clear, however, that "there is a way that seemeth right, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

One needs to recognize that when these representatives of the cults appear, they have sugar-coated their poison (literature),

hence naive people are often unaware of this, and too frequently they accept such false teachings and are victimized. Bible-believing Christians should continually be aware of these false teachers who are deceptive in their activity. Paul writes, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And, marvel not; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:13-14). The Lord also refers to a similar situation in a like context: "Beware of false prophets who come to you, in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

The writer of the Book of Proverbs hits the target as it were with his words of warning against false concepts. Isaiah, the prophet, scores an equally important lesson for us in his quoted statement made on those who err: "Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits" (Isaiah 30:11). Indeed, the cultists seek to make their teachings sound plausible. And, to people who are unable to discriminate between truth and error, it seems right what the deceivers present. It is to our advantage nevertheless, that false teachers may be tested on what they believe concerning the Deity of Christ as well as on the doctrine of salvation and the atonement. On these Biblical fundamentals the cults come short and may easily be identified.

John E. Dahlin

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

John E. Dahlin, Editor

QUESTION . . . What is the best way of identifying a cult or a false system of religion?

ANSWER . . . The basic test is on the matter of the Deity of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:3). Every cult in our time has a defective concept with regard to this vital doctrine. This test should be applied to each of the cults. Peter emphasizes also the atonement as being an essential truth. He refers to the false teachers as "denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Pet. 2:1). Christ's vicarious death on Calvary in our behalf is a foundational doctrine which must never be compromised (1 Pet. 1:16-17).

QUESTION . . . Who are best equipped to combat the cults successfully in a confrontation with them?

ANSWER . . . Only Bible-believing Christians who have a good knowledge of the Scriptures will be able to meet the challenge of the present-day cults. Liberal churches are defenseless in this regard. They do not even recognize the danger of the activities of these groups with their false doctrines. In fact, The National Council of Churches admitted two well known cultic groups in their organization a few years ago.