

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

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No. 6

2. ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SOCIAL GOSPEL
5. BEWARE! DANGEROUS THINKING,  
DANGEROUS THEOLOGY!
9. "ECKANKAR:" WHAT IS IT?
12. THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH  
FACES DANGER OF LOSING ITS  
FOUNDING MOTHER
14. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING  
TERMINOLOGY
15. A RECENT BOOK BY DR. W.A. CRISWELL
15. OUR NEW CATALOG WILL BE MAILED SOON
16. PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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## ANOTHER LOOK AT THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

*by Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor*

In the January-March issue of *The Discerner* appeared an excellent article by Harold S. Martin entitled, "*The Four Fallacies of the Social Gospel*". In that article the writer effectively contrasted the social gospel with the gospel of Christ. In his presentation he made it clear that the two positions were irreconcilable. The article was timely and factual, and it constituted a correct analysis of the social gospel.

In my discussion here I wish to follow another approach by pointing out that certain organizations, identified as evangelicals, are giving a sympathetic endorsement of certain aspects of the program initiated by the adherents or the supporters of the social gospel. It is common to find articles today in Christian periodicals where nationally prominent leaders within evangelical organizations propose to unite the two, that is, social action with the presentation of the gospel of Christ. In other words, they believe that both positions should be considered as being necessary in order to reach people for Jesus Christ. I am convinced,

however, that this is spreading an insidious error throughout the present-day churches. A considerable number of these leaders are giving much time and effort in propagating a substitute program which is far removed from New Testament Christianity. We are well acquainted with the expression a "new theology" and a "new morality". Now we are being confronted with a "new evangelism". Obviously attempting to raise the standard of living and to alleviate the suffering of mankind strikes a responsive chord in the hearts of many Christians. Some of these activities are commendable, but we ought not to claim that this is preaching the Gospel, or that the social approach is an integral part of Christ's Commission to His Church. Even humanists, socialists, and atheists manifest, at times, some zeal in seeking to better the lot of their fellowmen; but are they involved in declaring the gospel by so doing? Conservative Bible-believing Christians are convinced that it is impossible to include any of these groups as being partners in the furtherance of the

Gospel. The plain fact is that unregenerate men cannot participate in the proclamation of the Gospel. The blind cannot lead the blind. The Great Commission of Christ can be carried out only by redeemed men.

**What is the Gospel?** In a sentence one may correctly state that the gospel is the good news that Christ came to save a lost world through the reconciliation of men to God by means of the redemptive work of Christ accomplished on calvary's cross. Scripturally considered, the gospel is not social, it is spiritual. The apostle Paul makes this crystal clear what the gospel is according to the divine revelation. Listen to him! "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth . . . for in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:16-17). Not a word is mentioned about social action as being associated with the gospel. Paul, the writer of the major portion of the New Testament, never tampered with the thought of seeking to cure the ills of society by endeavoring to change the economic and social order. He knew the most effective way to change conditions within society was to make men disciples through the proclamation of the message of redemption. Notice he said with great emphasis, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" At all times he recognized that the gospel message was distinct, and it should not be incorporated with doing

good or being involved in social action.

The accusation is frequently made by those who advocate social service with evangelism that the conservative groups often manifest a calloused disregard for the needs of society. This charge is completely false, however. As a long-time historian I am convinced that the Bible-believing people have been at the forefront in helping humanity in many of the practical areas of life. In Britain they pioneered in advocating the abolition of slavery as early as 1807. In America those who held to the Scriptural truths supported reform measures and social justice, although such matter were not an integral part of the gospel ministry. No one has put this matter in better words than L. Nelson Bell who made the statement in *Christianity Today* some years ago: "Concern for the welfare of the body is right, a duty of the Christian; *but it is no substitute for concern for the souls of men.*" If we adopt the popular pattern in evangelism advocated today, we actually will have joined the humanists in their program. We know that humanism is basically a preoccupation with mankind here and now. But unless this concept is kept in its proper perspective, the meaning of the Christian faith can be lost in an emphasis which has nothing to do with Christ and the cross.

**What has Led to the New Concept within Evangelicalism?** Writers and spokesmen representing a large wing within evangelicalism have made it clear of late that they believe evan-

gelism will not succeed unless a distinct effort is made to include social action along with the presentation of the gospel. They insist that a good response to the message of the gospel will be forthcoming only as the physical needs of our fellowmen are met. This kind of rationalization has found its way into many of the new evangelicals. Instead of sticking with the Scriptural methodology these advocates of social action have built their concept on the observations of the many short-comings in society. And, they hold that many denominations have neglected a vital area of responsibility. In turn, it is held, this has hindered the proclamation and the acceptance of the message by people in every community. The tragedy is, some say, that today we have neglected the social teachings of Christ. As an answer to this charge, I feel the greater tragedy is that many churches have neglected to proclaim the gospel as the only remedy for lost humanity, that is, independent from the theory of social action. Unless this road is abandoned, by those who seek to blend the gospel with social service, they will end up as humanists who have succumbed to the delusion of our adversary. In a fair analysis of today's situation, it seems entirely clear that unknowingly many well-meaning groups have followed paths which fall outside the directives of the New Testament Scrip-

tures.

Ever since the early history of mankind, the adversary has sought to divert God's people from the main task by placing emphasis on secondary matters. It may appear to be a clever way to stigmatize the conservative Bible-believing people with the charge that they preach "pie in the sky" and that they are "so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly use." Compassion and concern for the needy are no exclusive attributes of those who advocate social service. The fact of the matter is that unless first things are met, we simply "beat the air" (as Paul points out) and fail in our assignment based on the Great Commission. No single matter caused more anxiety to Paul than the fear of being found ineffective in his ministry. Indeed, no true Christian lives detached from social responsibility. But each one who is enlightened by the Holy Spirit will insist on keeping the Gospel intact and not blended or diluted by a certain amount of social service. I have in this article endeavored to point out that some present-day methodology in evangelism is a rationalization of the Scriptural position. We are called by the Lord to be His witnesses, telling forth the good news that Christ is willing to save everyone who will respond to the gospel invitation. This, then, constitutes another look at social responsibility in the light of Scriptural truth.

# BEWARE! DANGEROUS THINKING, DANGEROUS THEOLOGY!

by David L. Larsen, Senior Pastor  
First Covenant Church, Minneapolis, MN

A critique of the book, **DID GOD KNOW? A Study of the Nature of God**,  
written by Howard Roy Elseth (Calvary United Church, Inc., 1977).

A number of inquiries have come to us regarding Mr. Elseth's book, concerning which the advertising blurb says, "Could be the most important book written about God in this century," "Praised at the National Christian Book Sellers Convention from the platform," "This may be the most important book you'll ever read!" These extravagant and immodest claims for the book, while obviously far short of the facts, are frightening because of the serious doctrinal errors perpetrated by the author and his school of thought (which while numerically insignificant is proving to be divisive and confusing among believers). The system propounded is not new, but is an extreme form of Arminianism arguing for the following erroneous positions:

1) The book maintains that God does not know everything, denying the omniscience of God, that God can make false prophecies or mistakes, and could one day even chose to become evil.

2) The book denies the doctrine of original sin (p. 95) failing to take into account that Romans 3:23, for instance, uses the aorist tense, "All did sin," obviously meaning our involvement and implication in Adam's federal act of rebellion and revolt.

3) And with a deficient view of God and of sin, the system will in-

evitably come up with a defective view of the Atonement as when the vicarious, substitutionary view of the atonement is termed "outdated" (p. 125). Curiously, Elseth holds up P. P. Waldenstrom as a model on atonement theory, apparently not realizing that Waldenstrom took the liberal Ritschlian view of sin and salvation over lock, stock and barrel.

## **The Basic Thesis of the Book**

The essential focus of the book is that God does not know the future anymore than we do, unless He unilaterally causes an event to happen or makes a projection on the basis of His vast knowledge of past and present events (p. 111), but on these He may be mistaken.

Did God know man would sin before He created him? Elseth's answer is "no!" He inquires, "Where could God get such information about our deeds before they happened?" He purports to give 11,000 verses that show that God changes His mind. He argues with respect to prophecy that "God often changes His mind and does not do the things He says He will do" (p. 109). He argues that "It was not until Jesus knew what was on the hearts of the religious leaders that He knew that He would be crucified on the cross" (p. 123). "IT WAS A SURPRISE TO JESUS." He sees God as "bewildered, astonished and sur-

prised" at Israel's apostasy and spiritual failure (p. 137). "Jesus did not know for certain whether Peter would fail or not" (p. 153). As a matter of fact, Jesus clearly indicated Peter would deny Him three times before the cock would crow three times (John 13:38, not in the subjunctive mood). How in Elseth's system did Jesus get such specific information about Peter's denial before it happened? Jesus prayed effectually that Peter's faith would not "fail utterly or finally." The central thesis of this book touches critical and important theological issues and the carefully constructed argument of the book with its much use of Scripture needs to be answered.

### **Did God Know?**

Let us recognize at the outset that orthodoxy has always affirmed the omniscience and perfect knowledge of God. God's omniscience has historically been defined as "that divine perfection whereby God's knowledge is absolute and universal in relation to Himself and all else." Calvinists and most Arminians have subscribed to this proper understanding of God's knowledge. Elseth parts company with Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley. Were they not searchers of the Scripture? Quenstedt speaks for classical Lutheran theology when he asserts that "God knows all things whatever that have been, are and shall be, or even in any way can be. Not only absolutely, but also that which is conditionally future or possible" (I Sam. 2:3, I John 3:20, I Kings 8:39, Ps. 7:9, 34:15, 139:1ff, Prov. 15:3). Bavinck

says that "The entire church accepted God's omniscience because it is so definitely and clearly taught in Scripture" (THE DOCTRINE OF GOD, p. 185). Berkhof points out that God knows the days of our lives (Ps. 37:18) and that God's omniscience must be held against Marcion, Socinus and all who believe in a finite God, ascribing to him a limited knowledge (SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 67). R. A. Torrey lists eleven propositions and amasses much Scripture in holding that God "knows from all eternity what shall be to all eternity and that God knows from the beginning what each individual man will do" (WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES, pp. 32-35). Even staunch Arminians like William B. Pope confesses his conviction on the basis of Scripture that "God knows the past and future as such, the most impressive aspect of the attribute is the foreknowledge that is bound up with what man calls contingency" (A HIGHER CATECHISM OF THEOLOGY, p. 81). None other than Charles G. Finney, presumed doyen of the Olson-Elseth group, affirms his belief that "foreknowledge is necessarily eternal with God, his purposes must also have been eternal and therefore, in the order of time, neither his prescience could have preceded His purposes, nor His purposes have preceded His prescience. They must have been contemporaneous and co-eternal" (LECTURES ON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 543). Dr. Harold B. Kuhn, distinguished professor at Asbury Seminary where Mr. Elseth received his divinity degree

states unequivocally that "There is no point in the divine career in which all things are not immediately present to His mind. He knows the end from the beginning and is subject to no surprises" (GOD: HIS NAMES AND NATURE, p. 18). It is thus clear that Elseth's view would dismiss what has been taught and held by orthodoxy across the broad spectrum of conviction and opinion through the centuries. This in itself gives us pause as we consider his argument.

### Logic and the Origin of Evil

Elseth leads into his presentation with a very telling argument articulated by many critics of Biblical Theism but quite effectively in the quotes used by Elseth from Bertrand Russell . . . "There is to me something a little odd about the ethical valuations of those who think that an omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent Deity would consider Himself adequately rewarded by the final emergence of Hitler and Stalin and the H-Bomb," (p. 19). God created a world He pronounced "good" (with no implication that it would continue to be good, contrast Elseth's statement on p. 25), He fully knew of man's ultimate rebellion and its consequences and therefore planned and purposed a way of redemption and salvation "before the foundation of the earth" (We shall deal subsequently with Elseth's effort to evade these truths). No one can disparage reason and logic without undercutting the possibility of communication itself, but our finite minds

cannot grasp fully the infinite God. "His ways are higher than our ways as high as the heaven is above the earth" (Isa. 55:8-9). Do any of us fully grasp the Holy Trinity? Do we grasp the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Jesus Christ? There is room for some humility at many points in the theological encyclopedia and not least when it comes to the origin of evil, concerning which God has not been pleased to speak extensively in Holy Scripture. Hodge is correct in saying that in this matter, children cannot sit rationally to judge the conduct of their parents nor peasants comprehend the conduct of an empire. After all, we are creatures. God does take ultimate responsibility for permitting evil—Ex. 4:11, etc. Knowing full well the consequences, He permitted sin, necessary if there were to be a free will, that the justice of His might would be known in His punishments and His grace in its forgiveness. BUT DOES MR. ELSETH THINK HE HAS SATISFIED BERTRAND RUSSELL BY LIMITING GOD'S KNOWLEDGE? To do so, he must also limit God's omnipotence (as did E. S. Brightman of Boston University), for is it *reasonable* for an all powerful God to allow present anguish to continue? Is it reasonable for a *benevolent* God to permit suffering as we observe it? All we shall have left is a finite being of uncertain benevolence and love if we go down the road to which this book calls us. There are mysteries here before we must bow our heads and take the shoes from our feet. It is holy ground.

## The Biblical Data

The God of the Bible is bigger and more knowledgeable than Mr. Elseth allows. "Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit" (Ps. 147:5). That can't be blamed on the King James Version, Mr. Elseth. The God of the Bible is unchangeable in His Being, "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8). When the Bible speaks of God repenting as in Gen. 6:5-7, we have the use of anthropomorphic or anthropopathic language. God does not have a body with eyes, arms, shoulders, fingers. He is spirit (John 4:24). This is language intended to help us understand a given situation. God was grieved as He always is by human sin and folly with its consequences, but it is not to say He changed His mind. I do not see God as timeless (Elseth seems to feel that everyone who believes in omniscience does). I agree with Dr. J. Oliver Buswell, "God always knows perfectly and completely what He will know when tomorrow becomes yesterday. His knowledge is not increased in the slightest degree by the fact that His consciousness is dynamically and perfectly related to the actual ongoing of finite events" (SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, I, p. 46). God's eternal state is not static. Recognizing that "Knowledge is after all a mysterious possession," Buswell argues effectively for God's knowledge of "free events in the future" and on this basis shares a beautiful understanding of answered prayer. "God has anticipated our prayers before the

foundation of the world. He has built the answer to our prayers into the very structure of the universe" (Ibid. p. 61).

What presupposition requires us to believe that because Jesus "marvelled" at the faith of the centurion (Luke 7:9) this faith was a "surprise" to Him? Jesus knew Lazarus was going to die (John 11) but wept at his grave. God's knowledge of future events does not minimize the dynamic function of prayer as in the cases of Moses or Hezekiah. The treatment of Jesus' petition ("Thy will be done on earth" p. 89) fails to take into account that this prayer has an ultimately certain fulfillment.

Over 300 prophecies about the first advent of the Lord Jesus are found in the Old Testament, not one of which is conditional or contingent. The prophecies about the dying thieves, the seamless robe, the burial in the rich man's tomb, etc., etc., involve knowledge of specific future events in which free moral agents make decisions. What about the dozens of specific prophecies Jesus made in the Olivet Discourse regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.? There's no subjunctive mood here. He foresaw what was coming very definitely and in precise terms.

"Why should God ask for information He already has?" Elseth inquires in wrestling with Isa. 5:1-7 (p. 141). For the same reason He asked Adam and Eve in the garden, "Where are you?" Or He asked Moses, "What is that you have in your hand?" Couldn't He see the staff? He asked these ques-



tions not to get information for Himself, but to point out facts and bring awareness to those whom He addressed. "Where is your brother?" God knew where murdered Abel was but wanted Cain to interface with Him on the crime committed.

Acts 15:17-18 and I John 3:20 and Galatians 4:9 still stand as great problems for Elseth. Did Jesus know how Peter and John would die as reflected in His words in John 21? Of course He knew and it is a reflection on our God and Savior to constrict His knowledge and insight. Not all prophecies made in Scripture have yet been fulfilled—but they all will be, including the promises about the land and its extent promised to Israel. I shudder when I read a statement like, "God can predict quite accurately but not with certainty" (p. 112). He predicted with accuracy and certainty about John the Baptist, the Virgin who would be with child, the nails on the Cross (Isaiah 53), the sufferings on Calvary (Ps. 22), etc., etc. Fulfilled prophecies are part of the great apologetic for dealing with inquiring, seeking minds, and Elseth has stripped them away.

It is not only this writer who has serious problems with this book and its implications. THE CHRIS-

TIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE directed by Dr. Walter R. Martin, has gone on record as follows: "Elseth's book has so many errors of logic and Scriptural exegesis that it is difficult to know where to begin." His method of handling "before the foundation of the earth" as in "The Lamb, slain from before the foundation of the earth," is seen to rely on a classical Greek lexicon rather than koine usage. Says THE CHRISTIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE, "Mr. Elseth's research on the word 'foundation' has left me dumb-founded, because there are so many errors I do not know where to begin. Mr. Elseth's discussion of the word 'foundation' is simply wrong. He has stressed certain secondary meanings and ignored or is not aware of a vast amount of evidence pointing another direction . . . there are great dangers in the Moral Government theology of Olson, Conn, and Pratney, and especially in the picture of God given in Elseth's book." On the basis of these theological deviations, the Calvary United Church, Inc. of Robbinsdale, Minn., was denied membership in the Greater Minneapolis Association of Evangelicals in 1979. BEWARE! DANGEROUS THINKING! DANGEROUS THEOLOGY!

## **"ECKANKAR:" WHAT IS IT?**

*by Dr. Roy E. Knuteson, The Peoples Church  
Fort Collins, Colorado*

One of the newest cults to burst upon the American scene, bills itself as "the most ancient religion known to man." Its name is ECKANKAR and it claims over

three million followers throughout the world today. It has emerged in high visibility through its large recruitment ads in many of our nations leading magazines. Local

chapters and lecture series are being advertised in cities across our land.

In addition to holding regional seminars around the globe, they hold large "conferences," and festivals," three times a year in various parts of the world.

Exciting and alluring claims are made for this religion, calling it "a way of life," and "the greatest adventure a person can undertake." This, coupled with glowing testimonies of "ECKists" of how they were "transformed from shy, fearful persons into people capable of taking leadership positions," has convinced many to subscribe to their courses and buy their books.

The current "ECK Master" is Darwin Gross, a Californian who admits to a fundamental religious background as a Baptist-Mennonite in North Dakota. He was deeply influenced by a Paul Twitchell, the American founder of ECKANKAR, who claimed to be the 971st Living ECK Master of the "Order of Vairage." Twitchell boasted of receiving his spiritual knowledge from a Rebozar Tarz, the "Great Tibetan ECK Master." Twitchell is said to be the author of over 60 manuscripts on the subject of ECKANKAR, some thirty-five of which were published by "The Illuminated Way Press," the movement's own publishing company. Darwin Gross says he was "chosen" after the death of Twitchell in 1971 to be "the 972nd Living ECK Master in the longest unbroken line of spiritual teachers on this planet."

What appears as a unique

spiritual experience is actually another form of Hinduism in a new format and disguise. In many ways, it is a bewildering entanglement of philosophical ideas with a religious twist. There is nothing scriptural in the entire movement, although it appeals to "the sacred scriptures of man," and uses some biblical terminology to confuse the ignorant and immature.

ECKANKAR derives its name from "ECK" which they claim, means "spirit" or "cosmic currents," which can be "heard as sound, and seen as light." "ECK" is further defined as "the realization of God-consciousness or total awareness and is thus the thread, so fine as to be invisible, yet so strong as to be unbreakable, that binds together all beings in all planes, all universes throughout all time and into eternity." ECKANKAR, itself, is defined as "the science of certainty," and the "science of Soul-Travel." ECKists do not accept things on faith—as Christians do, but rather "he proves them for himself"—thus becoming "spiritually mature, and master in his own right."

The "ECKists" as they call themselves, claim to believe in "SUGMAD," a word for God in ECKANKAR. This "God," however, is not the personal God of the Bible,—Creator, Sustainer, Savior, Lord, and King; but rather, the individual himself, or "God-consciousness," as the Hare Krishnas and other Oriental religionists believe.

### **The Five Bodies**

ECKANKAR teaches that each of us possess five bodies—"the

*physical*; which we see and touch; the *astral* or emotional body; the *casual* body, where the recollection of soul's past experience is kept; the mental or *etheric* body, including the unconscious thoughts that we experience in dreams; and *soul*." ECKists place the emphasis upon the "Soul body" as the ultimate vehicle of experience. The Soul, they claim, is "swifter than the speed of light," and is "the means of spiritual liberation within this lifetime."

The essential feature of ECKANKAR is to be free from all things, and to be guided only by ECK (Spirit) in all affairs. They claim that as they bring their physical, emotional, and subconscious states into harmony with soul, that they "find the answers to all their questions," and "discover a dynamic fully integrated existence."

### **Soul Travel**

One of the central features of this anti-Christ religion is the projection of inner consciousness through dreams and by an act of the will. It is an "out of the body" experience which is supposed to give the student "self-consciousness" and "God-realization" now. Darwin Gross claims that as a child he had these celestial experiences through dreams where Paul Twitchell was his spiritual guide even though he would not meet him until years later.

In the same vein, Gross now claims to be the "Mahanta," or "ever present guide and working partner" with ECKists everywhere. He, a mortal man, is

called the "Inner Presence" of every ECKist in the whole world!

Soul-travel is supposed to cause a person to reach a heavenly state or the "God-center." He is able, they claim, to "move from the visible planes into the invisible worlds at will," and thus experience the beneficial results of freedom and wisdom. These are the God-qualities that Gross says, "lies latent in each soul." This mental experience is purported to allow every person to understand true self and thus "prove" that "death is a myth." Shades of Christian Science! One ECKist claims:

"Through my spiritual exercises (meditations), I know what it is to leave my body or Soul. What man calls death is no longer of concern to me."

### **The Temples of Golden Wisdom**

These non-existent "temples" are said to be the repositories of the "Shariyat-Ki-Sugmod"—the ancient scriptures of ECKANKAR. There are seven of them and they are under the guardianship of the "ECK-Masters" within "the various worlds of God." Students of ECKANKAR are promised the opportunity to visit these "Temples of Golden Wisdom" and study under previous ECK-Masters, via dreams or the "spiritual exercises" of ECK.

These extra-terrestrial studies supposedly open the door to spiritual freedom and creativity in every aspect of life. Thus, the ECKist, "creates a greater experience for himself in each moment of time."

### **Recruitment Tactics**

All of the promotional literature

and lectures are designed as hooks to catch the inquisitive and the unwary in a system that requires two years of study under a "qualified supervisor." During this "trial period" the student diligently practices the exercises given to him. Then he is ready for the "commitment" and initiation which will make him a full-fledged member of this cult. Additional one year courses and books are available to the initiate as long as he pays the fee, and promises not to share this material with anyone except members of the same family living in the same home! Of course, anyone requesting literature, or purchasing books will be invited to their area seminars and will be further encouraged to enlist themselves into this exciting "way of life."

### Final Judgment

Bible students will recognize absolutely nothing scriptural in the entire movement. It is another of "Satan's schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11, N.I.V.), and must be rejected completely. It is with great gratitude that we have the Holy Scriptures as our standard for testing all such religious movements. Although this cult claims to be "the light," it falls under the condemnation of God's Word, which says:

"If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them: (Isaiah 8:20).

"And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light, therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

## THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH FACES DANGER OF LOSING ITS FOUNDING MOTHER

by Dr. Curtis Hutson, Editor  
*The Sword of the Lord*

Between 1844 and her death in 1915, Ellen G. White wrote more than forty-six volumes, totaling twenty-five million words, on the Bible, history and health. Mrs. White's literary output was based largely on two thousand or so visions she claimed to have had in which the voice of God instructed her on everything from biblical interpretation to diet and dress. For more than a century, those supposed visions and the writings which they inspired have served as the doctrinal basis of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

Robert Olson, director of the Ellen G. White estate, says flatly, "Adventists fully believe that God spoke through her a century ago and that her counsel is as dependable today as it was then."

Before Mrs. White came on the scene, followers of farmer/preacher, William Miller, had believed that Christ would return to earth on October 22, 1844, to cleanse the earthly sanctuary of sin. So, on that date Miller and his followers gathered in upper New York State to await the second coming. When Christ did not ap-

pear, most Millerites lost faith; but some rallied around Mrs. White, who followed and expanded Hiram Edson's "vision" maintaining that Miller had merely misinterpreted Daniel's revelation. Her explanation was that the real sanctuary was in Heaven and what happened on October 22, 1844, she said, was that Jesus had moved from one heavenly apartment to another in order to begin a final investigative judgment on the righteous that would precede His return to earth. This reinterpretation saved the Adventist movement and enabled Mrs. White and other Seventh-Day Adventists to organize a new church with a distinctive identity in 1860.

Now, sixty-six years after Ellen G. White's death, the notion that she was a true prophetess of God is being questioned by Adventist scholars who argue that many of her revelations were copied from other 19th century writers and that, borrowed or not, some of her most important revelations cannot be squared with the Bible. Two Adventist ministers, Desmond Ford from Australia and Walter Rea, a pastor and researcher from Long Beach, California, have publicized research disputing Mrs. White's authority.

Adventist scholars have long maintained that Mrs. White's writings on health and history were borrowed from other 19th century authors, but Rea insists that "the heart of Adventist theology was also copied from others." He estimates as much as 80% of Mrs. White's writings were copied almost word for word from

earlier works. "The borrowing," he says, "wasn't a sentence here and a word there; it was her habit to copy from the beginning of her writings to the end."

Walter Rea spent two years analyzing Mrs. White's works, and after announcing his conclusions, was booted out of his pulpit. Adventist Minister Desmond Ford was also defrocked last year after presenting church officials with a 991-page study that questioned a key doctrine of the modern Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Church officials have warned other doubters against spreading similar heresies, but their uncompromising response has provoked an uproar among an increasing number of Adventist scholars, pastors and students who are no longer prepared to accept Mrs. White as the final authority in questions of biblical interpretation.

Rea said what bothers him most is not her failure to attribute her ideas to their proper source but her insistence on attributing them to God. "The heart of what we were taught was supposed to have been given us by a vision from God," he says. "Now we know it is all false."

Most false religions are built on the Bible plus someone's additional revelation. The Bible is God's revelation to man. There is no other. Jude 3 says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the

saints."

The expression, "once delivered to the saints," doesn't mean once upon a time; it means once and for all. No additional revelation will be delivered. The faith has been delivered to the saints. The Scriptures not only make it clear that the Bible is God's revelation to man but warns against adding anything to this revelation:

*"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of*

*this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."*—Rev. 22:18.

*Proverbs 30:6 warns, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."*

Beware of any religion that has as its doctrinal basis anything other than the Bible—the only inspired, infallible, inerrant revelation from God.

Used with permission—*The Sword of the Lord*  
Feb. 20, 1981 issue.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING TERMINOLOGY

*by Prof. John E. Dahlin*

One of the snares of the adversary is to invest certain words with new meanings in order that they may spell out positions which are unsupported in the Scriptures. Take for example the often used expression, *the social implications of the Gospel*. It is a technique used by the liberals who seek to get people involved in areas which are not a part of the Lord's Great Commission. By using terminology in this manner, these people imply that Christianity must seek to evangelize society instead of winning individuals to Christ. Obviously, this contradicts the Biblical instruction on evangelism. Humanitarianism and good works ought not to be incorporated directly with the gospel. After having stated this position clearly, it should be pointed out, nevertheless, that Christianity is related to everyday life. And, Christians should speak out on matters which involve spiritual and moral issues. The constant cry of the liberals is, however, to make

the gospel relevant and to get the church involved with the social needs of men and many other issues which are clamoring for attention. We should understand that terminology applied in this manner is not a presentation of the gospel.

Another word misapplied and twisted in meaning is *fundamentalism*. Of late it usually has come to mean that which the word was never intended to imply, that is, when it first came into prominence. In our time the word fundamentalists is generally selected to identify those people who allegedly manifest an unbrotherly attitude towards those who may understand the Scriptural teachings is a less positive way. In other words, often attacks are made on fundamentalists as people being inflexible, dogmatic, and insensitive to the needs of society. In the early period of the century certain fundamentals of the faith were forged out of concentrated Bible studies and major con-

ferences where Christian leaders met in order to formulate their Biblical positions in a meaningful manner. This involved a belief in the verbal inspiration and inerrance of the Scriptures. It included also the acceptance of the literal account of creation and the origin of life as recorded in Genesis. More than that, fundamentalism covered such doctrines as the virgin birth of Christ, the Lord's

deity, the vicarious atonement and bodily resurrection of Christ and a firm belief in His return. Rightly understood, fundamentalism is an appropriate word and is important when placed in the right context. The word is being discredited today by people who seek to stigmatize those who refuse to move with the ecumenical majority in compromising the gospel.

### **A RECENT BOOK BY DR. W. A. CRISWELL**

The pastor of the widely known First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas has rendered a fine service, especially for young people of this generation in authoring the book entitled, *Did Man Just Happen?* He points out clearly that people must choose either the explanation of man's origin as provided in the Book of Genesis, or accept the evolutionary theory (supposition or guess) that man is the product of a mechanistic and impersonal universe. Dr. Criswell has provided in the book an impressive line of arguments why resident forces in the universe could not have produced the forms of life which we see all around us. The author demonstrates fine scholarship in treating this timely subject. He is fully acquainted with the scientific terminologies used by those who advocate evolution. Our office recommends this book to everyone interested in this subject. It should be placed in the hands of young people of high school and college age especially. It is a Moody publication—paperback and sells for \$2.25 plus 50 cents postage. Religion Analysis Service has it in stock.

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## **PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*John E. Dahlin, Editor*

*QUESTION . . .* How do certain groups seek to rationalize the presentation of the Gospel?

*ANSWER . . .* Anyone who adds to the simplicity of the Gospel is following a method of rationalization. In my article in this issue, I pointed out that those who advocate social action as a vital part of evangelism are placing human explanations at par with the Scriptural position as it concerns the Gospel. It follows the old path of rationalization based on observation and human wisdom. The Scriptures plainly set forth the Gospel as being completely independent in achieving its objectives apart from human methodology.

*QUESTION . . .* How do cultic groups rationalize their position in the light of the Scriptural Truth?

*ANSWER . . .* This they do in two ways: First, they follow an extremely legalistic position, such as the Judaizers did among the Galatians. Their teaching therefore becomes a system of salvation based on works and not grace. Secondly, they claim special revelation regarding the unusual positions which they maintain and defend. Ongoing revelation, which they hold, is simply a rationalization of their doctrinal concepts in order to gain followers.