

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

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CULTIC TEACHINGS ARE IRRECONCILABLE WITH BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

During my twenty-eight years as director of Religion Analysis Service I have learned a great deal about cultic activities in America. Since we have an adequate amount of literature on cults in our office, I have had the opportunity of examining the teachings of numerous cults of our time. By means of this article, I wish to point out some matters which have disturbed me a great deal. My continuous correspondence with many people also has given me information about what people think regarding the cultic groups. The information which I have gained, has convinced me that a considerable number of evangelicals do not understand the evil activities carried on by these spurious organizations. Again and again, certain people have mentioned to me words like these: "Without a doubt these groups, often referred to as cults, are striving to do God's work." And they add further, "If we only overlook certain peculiarities among them, we will feel satisfied that there is much that these organized groups have in common with Bible-believing Christians." Often I have heard words from people who have used this expression: "We think that much of Herbert W. Armstrong's writings make a lot of sense, and they strike the right keys on Biblical matters." It is nothing less

than tragic that people who profess to know Christ are so naive and misinformed on these vital matters. Others have said to me that these cultic groups may take a longer road than the rest of us, but they have the same goal and destination as those known as evangelicals. It is my prayer and desire to write helpfully on the subject under consideration.

First of all, we need to hear what the Scriptural response is to the spirit of accommodation which has been discussed in the preceding paragraph. The Apostle John, living at the close of the first century, writes authoritatively through divine inspiration and makes this statement: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world... Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is the spirit of anti-Christ whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world" (I John 4:1, 3). John admonishes us to use discrimination in judging between truth and error. My judgment in the matter is that no past generation has manifested the lack of discrimination as much as our own. It is unfortunate that many people have no capability in rejecting the propaganda of present-day cultists.

We have, therefore, a considerable element within the evangelical community who are incapable of combating false doctrines due to a lack of conviction and knowledge on what the Bible teaches. What do the Scriptures teach on the fundamental doctrines?

Here are some verses which may properly be applied to present-day cultic teachings: "Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more and more ungodliness . . ." (II Tim. 2:13). The apostle continues: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (II Tim. 3:13-14). "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (II Tim. 4:1). "Therefore stand and hold the tradition which ye have been taught, whether by word or our Epistle" (II Thess. 2:15). "There shall be false teachers among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them" (II Pet. 2:1). There is no hint or suggestion that accommodation might be made with heretics. In fact, we are exhorted to beware of every false doctrine which is being propagated by false teachers. Paul speaks about those "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (II Tim. 3:5).

On the subject of Christology, what does the Scripture teach? Here are key statements from the New Testament: "For in Him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace

and truth" (John 1:14). "And when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1:6). "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness (of the Godhead) dwell" (Col. 1:19). "Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). To Philip, Jesus said, ". . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). In Matthew we read the significant statement: "And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 26:64-64). The significant thing in this passage is that Christ, under oath, declared that He was the Son of God in the manner in which no other person has the right or the authority to make any such claims. The doctrine of the Deity of Christ is being challenged by the cultic groups of our time. For example, Victor Paul Wierwille, the founder of the cult known as "The Way," wrote a book on the subject, "Jesus Christ is not God." This is completely contradictory to the Scriptural position, namely, that Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with God, the Father. In the light of that fact, no man has the option to reject Christ's Deity, nor to fellowship with those who fail to believe in the Lord's Divine Nature. It is altogether clear that the position of the cults on this doctrine is irreconcilable with the subject of Christology as it is set forth in the New Testament. In fact, by holding such a position, they are committed to a doctrine which has been rejected by Christianity since the first century.

Moreover, the cults have manifested a calloused disregard for

the authority as well as the infallibility of the Holy Scriptures. For example, the group known as The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints has demonstrated that it has given priority to the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*. They have actually disparaged the Bible by saying that practically every verse of the Scripture is corrupted by a faulty translation. No reputable scholar outside the Mormon church is in agreement with such a statement. In reality, the Book of Mormon becomes the Bible of that cult.

The Jehovah's Witnesses also have very little regard for the Holy Scriptures. In order to bypass some of the truths of the Bible, they have arranged their own translation known as *The New World Translation*. So far as our knowledge extends, no evangelicals have given recognition to their translation. The Jehovah's Witnesses have refused to give the names of the translators. Are they ashamed of the committee's work?

Christian Science has also de-emphasized the Scriptures by giving primary consideration to the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, who authored the book, *Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures*. Christian Science considers her writings authoritative in all matters.

Again, cultists fail to follow the principles of Hermeneutics in their interpretation of the Scriptures. By Biblical Hermeneutics we mean certain basic principles are being used in the interpretation and explanation of Biblical truth. First of all, it means that texts selected for study and exposition must be placed in the context or setting where such appear in the Scripture. In other words, a text should never be wrenched out of this important relationship in the section or paragraph which is under consideration. When this principle is

abandoned, no satisfactory interpretation of the Word of God is possible. No cultic group is as guilty of this error as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Even in the selection of the name for their organization, the cultic leaders selected a number of Bible passages where the word "Witnesses" occur. This selection was made from both the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament. In these many references, the word "witness" or "witnesses" has no relationship to such an organization as the Jehovah's Witnesses. There was no regard for the context in the selection of such passages. They simply were selected in order to give better public acceptance to their organized activity. This explains what is meant by using words in the Scripture in a misleading manner. This becomes an unfair method in the treatment of passages in the Scripture.

Another clear example of the maneuvers of the Jehovah's Witnesses is found in their handling of Chapter One and verse one in the Gospel of St. John, where the Deity of Christ is involved. There they have translated the key in that verse by the words, "a god." Christ is placed in a lower position than one who is co-equal and co-eternal with God, the Father. In fact, by that translation, Christ becomes the highest creature but not the eternal Son of God. The New World Translation of the Bible by the Jehovah's Witnesses is the only translation which has inserted the words "a god" in this vital verse where the Deity of Christ is involved. It is proper to point out, that no other translators have emasculated that vital verse in this manner. This is nothing less than tampering with the Greek text in undermining the Deity of our Lord. The translation of the Scriptures by the Jehovah's Witnesses was done by a committee whose names are anonymous to this

day. The Jehovah's Witnesses in straying from God's Word makes their fellowship with Bible-believing Christians impossible.

The Scriptural position places the cults outside the sphere of Christian fellowship. Paul writes, "We command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us" (II Thess. 3:6). While this restriction was directed against individual persons, it must be understood in a wider context. With reference to those who possessed only a form of godliness, the apostle writes, "From such turn away" (II Tim. 3:5). John the apostle prescribes a still more specific course to be followed toward those who carry on a false propaganda, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the apostolic teaching) receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed. For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds" (II John 10-11). This statement of John is an order for a complete disengagement from all propagandists of falsehood.

The most serious form of deviation is when it concerns Biblical doctrine. In this area the cultists have made their position irreconcilable with those who accept the infallibility and the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. Let me illustrate the method of rationalization of the Scriptures which is followed by the cults. Here is a quotation from the highest authority in the Mormon church, namely, the late President David O. McKay: "What about the millions who died without having heard the name of Jesus Christ? They are all our Father's children as much as you and I are. Is it the act of a loving Father to condemn them forever outside the kingdom of God because they have

had no opportunity to hear the Name of Jesus Christ? No, it is not. We believe that those who have died without having heard the Gospel here in mortality will have an opportunity to hear it in the other world." On this point, the apostle Paul gives an answer: "For as many as have sinned without the law shall perish without the law" (Rom. 2:12). Notice they will perish. Obviously their judgment will be less severe than that of those who have heard the gospel and have rejected it. Peter gives a complete statement of the way of salvation: "Neither is there salvation in any other; For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Not only the Mormons, but the other cults likewise, rationalize the Word of God. None are willing to accept the Scriptures at their face value. Each cult follows the method of rationalization of the Scriptures. By proceeding along this line, Biblical doctrine practically has no meaning. My opening remark is correct, the position of the cults is irreconcilable with believers who accept the authority of the Scriptures. At no point of comparison do the cultists fall short as much as on Biblical doctrine. Any accommodation with the cults is dishonorable to our Lord and will cause irreparable harm to the cause of Biblical Christianity.

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NEW AGE TRACT AVAILABLE

In the last issue of the *Discerner* there was an article by Dr. Roy E. Knuteson, entitled, "The Marks Of The New Age Movement." This timely article has now been produced in tract form by Dr. Knuteson who has made copies of it available to subscribers of the *Discerner*. We do not know just now what the price will be for a quantity, but you may write in for a free copy and then decide if you want to order more.

GOD CALLING—?

by Prof. Edmond C. Gruss
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God Calling (Spire Books, Fleming H. Revell) is the title of a devotional book which was first published in the mid-1930's. It is currently in print and it is stocked by many, if not most, Christian bookstores. The cover of the present paperback edition describes it as "THE INSPIRING CLASSIC" in which "CHRIST'S WORDS CUT A DAILY PATH OF JOY AND PEACE THROUGH OUR TROUBLED AND CONFUSED WORLD." That the book has had a wide circulation and acceptance is attested by statements in the 1950 publication, *God at Eventide*: "Now, in response to many requests for a companion-volume, and to mark the 100th thousand of *God Calling*, this new book, produced on the same lines, is launched" (p. 7). It is also predicted that "the millions who cherished GOD CALLING will welcome this companion volume." This writer's May, 1981 edition of *God Calling* shows it as the twenty-sixth printing. In addition, in researching for this study, it was found that not only was the book carried by most Christian bookstores, but that it sold well, and that it was sometimes even requested when copies were not on the display shelves. All of the above would indicate, that for many, *God Calling* has been, and still is, a widely circulated, influential, and significant book.

This writer's first contact with *God Calling* came during the preparation of the manuscript for his book, *The Ouija Board: Doorway to the Occult* (Moody Press, 1975). In an appendix the subject of automatic writing was discussed and the following statement was made,

"It is surprisingly sad, but true, that even Christians have been attracted to automatic writing, not realizing that it is an occult practice which can be deceptive and dangerous. The book *God Calling*, by two anonymous women, is one example of 'Christian' automatic writing" (p. 16).

After giving some further information on the book, the conclusions of Tim Timmons on *God Calling* were quoted:

"The book is full of good thoughts, but careful examination will show that many of the concepts sound as though they originate from the angel of light [2 Cor. 11:14], rather than the living Christ. This whole experience is inconsistent with God's Word, that is our only reliable guide to examining this kind of activity" (*Chains of the Spirit — A Manual for Liberation*, p. 30).

Several years after the publication of *The Ouija Board* book, letters from England began to arrive. Some questioned the above comments and interpretations, while others asked for further verification. These communications and others stimulated the present writer to investigate the origin of *God Calling* and its contents more thoroughly. Some of the findings follow in this article.

One of the anonymous "two listeners" who received the messages which make up the book explained in the introduction ("The Voice Divine") the background to them. In 1932, she had received a copy of A. J. Russell's book, *For Sinners Only*. She read it and was much impressed with it—so much in fact that she wrote down over a hundred names of people to whom she would like to send it. She then explained what took place.

"A few months later I read it again. It was then that there came a persistent

desire to try to see whether I could get guidance such as A. J. Russell reported, through sharing a quiet time with the friend with whom I was then living. She was a deeply spiritual woman with unwavering faith in the goodness of God and a devout believer in prayer. . . .

. . . We sat down, pencils and paper in hand and waited. . . . My results were entirely negative. . . .

. . . But with my friend a very wonderful thing happened. From the first, beautiful messages were given to her by our Lord Himself, and every day from then these messages have never failed us."

What is the significance of A. J. Russell, the book *For Sinners Only*, and the "guidance such as A. J. Russell reported?" Louis Talbot stated that one "must examine writers such as A. J. Russell" and his book *For Sinners Only* to understand the Oxford Group and its teachings, and that it "practically constituted a textbook for the Group" (*The King's Business*, Jan. 1962, p. 14). (The Oxford Group has been known as Moral Re-Armament since 1938). Walter Clark listed *For Sinners Only* among those books which "have been written or prepared by adherents of the Group" (*The Oxford Group*, p. 262) and includes A. J. Russell among the "journalistic converts" to the Oxford Group (p. 19).

How was Russell's book received? Louis Talbot reported,

"When Russell's 'For Sinners Only' was first published, it was denounced by churchmen as 'deplorable' and 'dangerous,' but to me the worst thing about it was that it was not clear on the way of salvation and did not set forth clearly the Gospel of a crucified, risen, and glorified Saviour. The atonement was scarcely mentioned" (*The King's Business*, Jan. 1962, p. 14).

The guidance method reported by A. J. Russell and used by the "two listeners" of *God Calling* was also a

practice of the Oxford Group. This approach was criticized and condemned in the 1930's and in later years by a number of well-known Christian leaders such as T. T. Shields, H. A. Ironside, Louis Talbot and A. C. Gaebelein (*The King's Business*, Jan. 1962, p. 17); *Buchmanism Called Now the Oxford Group Movement*, pp. 34-38). When William Irvine surveyed the opinions of other evangelical leaders on the guidance method of the Oxford Group he found them in one accord in their warnings against it (*Heresies Exposed*, 3rd. ed., p. 49). What was their concern? Pastor Harold T. Commons, who had been a former member of the Oxford Group, gave one response,

"Finally their idea of 'guidance' is false to the Scripture. . . . Sitting down with paper and pencil in hand and letting the mind go absolutely blank, and then writing down whatever flashes across the mind as God's orders for the day, is beyond anything promised or sanctioned in Scripture. Indeed this 'passivity' of mind is a very perilous condition to be in, for it is precisely at such moments that Satan gains control and does his devilish work" (*Heresies Exposed*, pp. 50, 51).

Late in 1926 the Oxford Group's base of operations moved from the United States and "by 1927 the center of gravity had shifted to England to the extent that the Group was speaking of its 'mission to America'" (Clark, *The Oxford Group*, p. 75). In 1932 there was an Oxford Group luncheon for members of Parliament, in London, and by 1935, the annual "Houseparty" at Oxford University (which began in 1930) had 10,000 in attendance (Clark, *The Oxford Group*, p. 76).

With the prominence of the Oxford Group in England during the 1930's, one might conclude that the "two listeners" of *God Calling*, who lived

in England, would not only be familiar with A. J. Russell, *God Calling* and guidance, but that they would also be familiar with the Oxford Group and its teachings. This conclusion is verified by some of the statements in *God Calling* in which the "Living Christ" uses the terminology of the Oxford Group and promotes its philosophy (see for example Feb. 15).

With the connection of *God Calling* with the Oxford Group firmly established, it is not surprising to find that even the book's title originated from it. This is established by an observation made by Walter Clark, "Expressions such as 'God calling' . . . can be found on nearly every page of the volume of his [Buchman's] collected speeches" (*The Oxford Group*, p. 108). It should also be remembered that A. J. Russell edited *God Calling* for publication.

From all that has been presented, one must conclude that the woman who was so impressed with the book *For Sinners Only* and the method of guidance presented in it, although sincere, lacked discernment and an adequate knowledge of Scripture.

As for the Oxford Group (or Moral Re-Armament) itself, a number of evangelical writers have written on it and have identified it as a cult (see for example: Spittler's, *Cults and Isms*; Van Baalan's, *The Chaos of Cults*; Irvine's, *Heresies Exposed* and Gaebelein's, *Buchmanism*).

What about the contents of *God Calling*? Many have stated that they have read it with benefit and some have made reference to its ministry to them. How might these positive experiences be explained? Tim Timmon's words quoted earlier should be remembered, "The book is full of good thoughts . . ." There is no denying that many statements in the book are inspiring. Scripture is often

quoted in *God Calling* and this is a source of blessing. But Scripture is often quoted in cultic literature—the *Book of Mormon* for example. Reading Scripture wherever it may be found and being blessed by it does not automatically bring endorsement to the publication in which it is included. Another important observation on many readings in *God Calling* was made by an experienced administrator from a mission agency who was asked to review the book.

"An evangelical reader can read his understanding into the text and enjoy it. A Modernist or mystic (or in some cases, even a Muslim) can read his presuppositions into the text and equally enjoy it. This is not an evangelical book except as read with evangelical presuppositions.

To complete this point, it was found that some who read *God Calling* with initial enthusiasm, later had problems concerning it. One experience might be cited. A Christian husband explained:

"We came across *God Calling* some two years ago. At first we thought the book was helpful, and my wife in particular was very enthusiastic about it. However, the more we read it the more we became uncomfortable about it. It began to take priority over God's Word and anything that does that must be suspected. . . .

A friend of ours who also used the book gave up using it when she found, in her own words, 'that I was beginning to use it rather like a horoscope from a daily paper, turning to it each day to see what was predicted.'

We finally abandoned the book following a public warning against its use in a meeting which we attended. . . .

We have become quite convinced that these books [*God Calling* and *God at Eventide*] are the product of the 'Angel of Light,' cunningly written to fool God's people. . . .

Thus to sum up our experience:

(1) We were completely taken in by it to begin with

- (2) It began to assume an importance above that of Scripture
- (3) We became increasingly uncomfortable about its contents
- (4) We were strongly reluctant to give it up
- (5) We were convinced it was Satanic and destroyed it
- (6) We repented before the Lord for using it and sought deliverance from any Satanic contact made through it. . . ."

The following statements, made by one of the "two listeners," should cause a Christian reader concern. ". . . We were being taught, trained and encouraged day by day by HIM personally, when millions of souls, far worthier, had to be content with guidance from the Bible, sermons, their churches, books and other sources." "So to us this book, which we believe has been guided by our Lord Himself, is no ordinary book."

If what was stated is accepted as true, the implications are tremendous. Personal guidance is better than the Bible and the *God Calling* book has more actual words of Christ than the Bible. Extra-biblical revelation is being received today. In fact, this is what the "Living Christ" told them. "Truly, I said to My Disciples, 'I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.' But to you, and the twos who gather to hear Me as you do, I can declare those things now, that then I left unsaid" (p. 69).

As is typical in many other places in *God Calling*, Christ is made to violate the meaning of John 16:12 in context. John 16:13 indicates that in Christ's absence further revelation of truth would come through the Holy Spirit, "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come."

A discerning Christian would also question the source of the messages in the book when it was revealed that, "Totally unexpected interpretations of His [Christ's] own words were given." Many readings in *God Calling* have short excerpts from the Bible. But since the references are not usually given, one must find them and examine them in context. Many such examinations by this writer confirmed the misuse of Scripture very similar to what is found in the cults. Several examples, of many that could be given, illustrate this point. Space permits only a brief comment after each example.

(1) "I ache to find a way into each life and heart, for all to cry expectantly, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus'" (p. 22). Comment: This Scripture portion is found in Revelation 22:20 and is John's response to the announcement of Christ's return, "Surely I come quickly." The context has been lost in the *God Calling* reading.

(2) "When the Bible says, 'God has pure eyes to behold evil,' it means to impute evil to His people. He always sees the good in people. . . ." (p. 50). Comment: This portion of Habakkuk 1:13 is taken out of context. Its meaning is clearly understood when the remainder of the verse is read. God's holiness cannot regard evil with complacency or tolerate it.

(3) "Is not the message of My servant Paul now plain: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,' because my Guidance is intensified immeasurably in power, when the two are one in desire to be with Me. . . ." (p. 69). Comment: The portion of 2 Corinthians 6:14 in context (vs. 14-18) deals with the Christian's association with "unbelievers"—non-Christians. Reading the rest of verse 14 makes its misuse clear: "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what

communion hath light with darkness?"

(4) "Remember now abideth these three, Faith, Hope and Charity. . . . Hope, which is confidence in yourself to succeed" (p. 110). Comment: The explanation of a portion of 1 Corinthians 13:13 explains hope contrary to a Scriptural understanding. This hope is not in self but in God who can be trusted to carry out His promises.

(5) "I and my Father are one. One in desire to do good" (p. 152). Comment: The first sentence is a direct quote from John 10:30. It is followed by an interpretation often given by cults in their rejection of the Deity of Christ.

This writer finds it difficult to believe that the Christ of the Bible would make the statements quoted below.

"I need you more than you need me" (p.60). "...I await the commands of my children" (p. 63). "Looking to Me all your thoughts are God-inspired. Act on them and you will be led on" (p. 104). "See Me in the dull, the uninteresting, the sinful, the critical, the miserable" (p. 111). "I do not delay My second coming. My followers delay it" (p. 177). "Remember this beautiful earth on which you are was once only a thought of Divine Mind" (p. 201).

Four additional examples of statements attributed to Christ in *God Calling*, with brief comments, follow.

(1) "Wherever the soul is, I am. Man has rarely understood this. I am actually at the center of every man's being, but, distracted with the things of the sense-life, he finds Me not" (p. 55). Comment: Is Christ resident in "every man's being"—the redeemed and the unredeemed?

(2) "Love is God. Give them love, and you give them God" (p. 72). Comment: "God is love"—I John 4:8—but

the statement is not reversible.

(3) "How often mortals rush to earthly friends who can serve them in so limited a way, when the friends who are freed from the limitations of humanity can serve them so much better, understand better, protect better, plan better, and even plead better their cause with Me" (p. 145). Comment: Here communication with the departed and the invocation of saints is taught.

(4) "Yes! but remember the first Hail must be that of the Magi in the Bethlehem stable" (p. 204). Comment: "Christ" makes a common mistake here. Matthew 2:9-11 indicates that the Magi arrived at Bethlehem a considerable time after Jesus was born. Note that verse 11 mentions them at the "house." The Magi never did visit Jesus at the stable, but the shepherds did (Luke 2:15-20).

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that what has been presented here is just a brief survey—much more could have been given to further illustrate the errors and problems in *God Calling*. One need not question the sincerity of the "two listeners," but the method of guidance they employed is not a Christian approach to religious truth. The good thoughts and inspiring statements attributed to Christ in *God Calling* are often combined with faulty theology and the misinterpretation of Scripture. Communications from the "Living Christ" would not have these defects!

The experience of these two women is not materially different from that reported by Mrs. Ruth Townsend in the use of the ouija board: "Marion and I studied with the ouija board. . . . We started by getting sermons from the beyond. We have hundreds of these sermons that we had typewritten and preserved. . . . All of them came from the ouija board" (*The Oui-*

ja Board: *Doorway to the Occult*, p. 84).

Is the title, *God Calling*, accurate?

The evidence says no! The book is not a trustworthy source for Christian blessing, help and guidance.

CREATION IS THE FOUNDATION

(Continued from the January-March issue 1984, page 15, by *Henry M. Morris*)

Foundation of Faith

The great message of Christianity is that "the just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38), speaking of "them that believe, to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). But exactly what is this *living* faith—this *saving* faith? Faith in the abstract is only naive sentimentality; it must be faith in something and/or someone to have any substance.

But, *first of all*, it is the foundational faith of Hebrews 11:3, the faith by which "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." This affirmation clearly tells us that any meaningful faith for salvation and the Christian life must be founded, first of all, on faith in God's special creation of all things, not out of already existing materials but solely by His omnipotent Word!

Foundation of the Gospel

Many Christians, who either ignore or compromise the Biblical doctrine of creation, have urged creationists just to "preach the Gospel not creation!" But this is impossible, because the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is squarely founded on creation. The wonderful threefold work of Christ (creation, conservation, consummation) as outlined in Colossians

1:16-20, is identified as "the gospel" in Colossians 1:23. The very last reference to the Gospel in the Bible (Rev. 14:6, 7) calls it the *everlasting* Gospel (thus, it could never have been any different), and its message is to "worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

While it is surely true that the central focus of the Gospel is on the substitutionary atonement and victorious bodily resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4), it also includes His coming kingdom (Matt. 4:23) and His great creation. Any other gospel is "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6) and is not the true gospel. Without the creation, a supposed gospel would have no foundation; without the promised consummation, it offers no hope; without the cross and empty tomb, it has no saving power. But when we preach the true Gospel, with the complete Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ as they really are, we build on a "sure foundation," can promise a "blessed hope," and have available "all power in heaven and earth" through Christ who, in all His fullness, is "with us, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

(from *Impact*, Dec. 1983. Used with permission; Institute For Christian Research)

ROSICRUCIANISM

by *Religion Analysis Service, Inc.*

(Article included in this issue to meet inquiries for information on this cult).

WHAT DOES THE CROSS mean to you? The answer of a Rosicrucian differs essentially from the answer of a Christian. Who are these "Brothers of the Rosy-Cross?" or "Rosy-Cross Knights" or "Scribes of the Western Wisdom" whose ads appear in many magazines.

The Rosicrucians claim the order originated as the "Great White Brotherhood" in Egypt in 1500 B.C., was brought to Palestine by Solomon, to Greece by Solon, and to Italy by Pythagoras. The emblem and name were believed to be the coat of arms and the pseudonym of Johann Valentin Andrea (1586-1654), disputed founder or restorer of the order. Present membership is about 60,000, according to American Peoples Encyclopedia, 1952.

The "Ancient Mystic Order of Rosae Crucis" (AMORC) has headquarters for North and South America at San Jose, California. It advertises that it is "not a religion," but it deals largely with religious subjects, and it takes the place of a religion in the lives of its devotees. The split-off, or the Rosicrucian Fellowship, has headquarters at Oceanside, California. Finding their teachings practically the same, we shall quote from the publications of both.

The Birth of the Rosicrucian Fellowship, by Mrs. Max Heindel, is a fantastic account of the beginnings of the movement at Oceanside. (Max Heindel, late apostle of Rosicrucianism, was the author of some of

the tomes from which we quote.) After telling of his leaving his body ill in Los Angeles to take a "soul flight" in 1910 with an invisible "Teacher" to a temple in Germany to be initiated into "the deeper mysteries," she concludes by saying: "The particular work of the Fellowship is to disseminate the esoteric doctrines of the Christian religion, since the Rosicrucian Philosophy is an esoteric Christian Philosophy. It is destined to become the universal religion of the world, because Christ is to have charge of human evolution during the next Great Sideral Year of approximately 25,000 years."

Rosicrucianism has an elaborate mystic explanation for literally everything, but we shall confine our comments to their teachings regarding the Cross, the Cycles, and the Christ. At the outset, we note that Rosicrucianism is "esoteric"—for the select few only—while the ground around the true cross "on which the Prince of Glory died" is very level and accessible to all. Rosicrucianists have taken the "offense" out of the Cross; theirs is not an "emblem of suffering and shame," but of light, with the decoration of a red rose or a wreath of roses at the center.

"Rosicrucians look ardently forward to the day when the roses shall bloom upon the cross of humanity" (Heindel: *The Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, p. 538). To them, the cross is "symbolical of life currents, vitalizing the bodies of plants, animal, and man . . . symbolical of man's past evolution, present con-

stitution, and future development . . . The upright lower limb of the cross is a symbol of the plant kingdom . . . The upper limb of the cross is the symbol of man . . . The horizontal limb of the cross is the symbol of the animal kingdom" (Heindell: *Rosicrucian Philosophy in Questions and Answers*, p. 202).

The apostle Paul warned against such "enemies of the Cross of Christ." His own testimony was, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14).

Passing on to the Rosicrucian doctrines of the endless Cycles, we read of seven worlds (such as the physical world, the desire world, the thought world), each divided into seven regions. And we read that each world passes through seven periods of rebirth. And every man has various bodies (such as the dense body, the vital body, the desire body) in the present existence; and each has had and is to have countless reincarnations.

Spiral evolution, and spirals within spirals, ever upward!

We are told that man's spirit will sometime be "merged in God, from whom it came, to remerge at the dawn of another Great Day, as one of His glorious helpers. During its past evolution its latent possibilities have been transmuted to dynamic powers. It has acquired Soul Power and a Creative Mind as the fruitage of its pilgrimage through matter. It has advanced from impotence to Omnipotence, from nescience to Omniscience" (*Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception*, p. 429). "It will take me many lives to attain complete self-mastery" (*The Rosicrucian Fellowship Magazine*, Readers' Questions Department, Jan. 1952, p. 38).

This Department of the same issue answers a question about "Being

'Saved.'" The scoffing reply is that at revival meetings the emotional nature is affected and "the desire body" so stirred that the individual may mistakenly think his sins have suddenly been washed away. The conclusion is: "The Western Wisdom Teachings explain that life on Earth is a great school, consisting of many 'days.' During some of these 'days' or lives, we have very many difficult lessons to learn . . . If, life after life, we continue to do our best, even though we do make mistakes, we accomplish real soul growth—and it is only by making soul growth that we are actually 'saved' . . . As we learn, life after life, to live in accordance with divine principles, we become more perfect and eventually will attain godhood."

The Bible says, "It is appointed unto man once to die" (Hebrews 9:27). Only once, instead of countless times; and there will be one generation of Christian believers who will not die at all. See I Thessalonians 4:13-18. However, none "attain godhood." When Lucifer said, "I will be like the Most High," he was cast down. See Isaiah 14:12-15.

Finally, what about the Lord Jesus Christ? Rosicrucianism distinguishes between Jesus and the Christ. According to *The Rosicrucian Philosophy* (p. 181), "Jesus himself was a spirit belonging to our human evolution, and so was Gautama Buddha . . . The Christ spirit which entered the body of Jesus when Jesus himself vacated it, was a ray from the cosmic Christ. We may follow Jesus back in his previous incarnations, and we can trace his growth to the present day. The Christ Spirit, on the contrary, is not to be found among our human spirits at all."

What blasphemous language—"his previous incarnations" and "his growth to the present day!" "And God

calls Rosicrucianism "a liar" because it denies that Jesus is the Christ (I John 2:22).

Rosicrucianists, while "denying the Lord that bought them," use "great swelling words" in offering sin-laden, heart-hungry humanity literally everything. Turn instead to God's

Book. A Cross looms there, and it is anything but rosy. It was the place of death for "the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23). "He that hath the Son hath life" (I John 5:12).

BOOK NOTICES

by Rev. Ewald Eisele

THE ISLAM DEBATE. By Josh McDowell and John Gilchrist. (Here's Life publishers, 1983) 198 pages, paper, \$5.95.

The first 139 pages of this book deal with the teachings of Islam. The authors go into the life, ministry and death of Muhammed as well as the source of his teachings.

Following this, chapter two details the teaching of Islam and in the process compares the Christian Scriptures with the Qur'an on many points. I will say this for the first section as I will for the last, and shorter section which records the debate, chapters one and two are worth the price of the book!

The debate actually took place in August, 1981, in Durban, South Africa. The participants were Josh McDowell and Ahmed Deedat, the president of the Islamic Propagation Center in Durban. The introductory page to this section tells us that the debate was divided into three parts: Opening arguments, 50 minutes; Rebuttals by each, 10 minutes; Closing statements, 3 minutes for each.

Again, this section is worth the price of the book. Learn here how the mind of Islam works. How a false idea is so ingrained into, not only their Qur'an, but also, their view of other religions, especially Christianity. Learn too, how to deal effectively

with their arguments regarding the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Probably most important, learn that apart from the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit they will not only live, but die, blinded by the god of this age.

REINCARNATION vs. RESURRECTION. By John Snyder. (Moody Press, 1984) 110 pages, paper, \$4.95.

From academic symposia on life after death, to parapsychological research and past life therapy practice, to the popular level of "come as you were" parties in California, indications are that belief in reincarnation may soon become the most commonly accepted theory of afterlife in America. For centuries, it has been the belief of the majority of the human race; now, according to some polls, it is accepted by at least one-fourth of all Americans. Not surprisingly, an even higher percentage of our college students embrace the idea.

It appears that reincarnation's popularity among today's youth is not the result of any compelling arguments on its behalf, or because the theory offers fresh insights into the human condition, but simply because it is the most recent wind to blow across the land.

One attraction of reincarnation for our culture is its apparent belief in

the eternal importance of people. At a time when belief in any form of life after death has been displaced by materialism, and when there has been a general loss of meaning in human life, belief in reincarnation offers some measure of hope.

Another reason for its reception is that it is very convenient to believe in reincarnation. It is easier to face than the prospect of giving account to an infinite, personal God who has the power to cast people into eternal separation. It appeals to the tastes and sensibilities of modern thinkers who prefer to believe that doctrines about God and humanity are unimportant. Further, reincarnation appeals to human pride by teaching that one's final destiny is determined by one's own work and efforts, not by the actions of a supreme Being. Clearly, one of the reasons many prefer the reincarnation theory is their abhorrence of the idea of personal guilt and responsibility.

Whatever the full reason for the major shift in American thinking about survival after death, reincarnation is an idea whose time has come.

This very important book attempts to show three things: (1) The case for reincarnation that has received a hearing among many intellectuals as well as by lay people is based upon a fallacy so subtly smuggled into the evidence that it can easily go undetected, (2) The biblical view of resurrection is antithetical to, and forever incompatible with, the theory of reincarnation. All attempts to find reincarnation in the Bible must end in failure, (3) Resurrection, as taught by Jesus of Nazareth, is the only view of life after death that can stand up under critical fire.

JESUS CHRIST IS GOD. By Robert L. Sumner. (Biblical Evangelism Press, 1983) 330 pages, paper, \$9.95.

There is no end to the writing of

books. Many are brought to our attention only to be filed away as being of no consequence. Others are read and re-read with interest and profit. This book by Dr. Sumner is in the second category.

So many times when books refuting some doctrine or movement are presented to the public, one is left to wonder just where the author got his information. Or if he does document his statements they are at the end of the chapter, or worse, at the end of the book. Now if you want just a little documentation regarding what Dr. Sumner has written in this detailed refutation of the most subtle cult of the day, The Way International, all you have to do is check the bottom of the page you are reading. There you will find some of the 560 footnotes in the book. In fact, to save space, and typesetting, abbreviations are used of the resources and these are listed on nine pages of a section called, "Bibliography and Abbreviation Symbols." Also enhancing the book is an Index of Scripture references used, over 1100 of them, listed on five pages.

Coming just at the right time, when this and other cults are out recruiting, this book will prove to be a veritable library of information for those who are doing battle with the enemy. The first chapter, 118 pages, with 185 footnotes, (only 37 pages in the entire book with no footnotes!), sounds the keynote of the book, "The Fatal Flaw, Rejection Of Christ's Deity."

If you are at all interested in finding out all about this blasphemous, idolatrous and satanically-inspired cult, this is the book that has been written for you.

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

John E. Dahlin, Editor

QUESTION . . . What makes a religious organization a Cult?

ANSWER . . . The deviation from the historic doctrines of Christianity should be the criteria used in identifying such groups. This may involve a departure from some or all of the established doctrines of the Scriptures. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses have departed from practically all of the vital points in the Christian Creed. Therefore, they should be classified among the cults.

QUESTION . . . Is there a record of any cult which has returned later to the Christian position after having been involved in false teachings?

ANSWER . . . Paul writes, "Evil men shall wax worse and worse deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:13). From the Scriptures, it appears that those who have departed from the faith will remain in that position. I know of no American cult which has returned later to a Biblical road. This is the tragic situation within the cultic realm.