

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

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LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

The theology of liberation has come into view during the past decade, or perhaps a little longer. Unquestionably, many of its exponents have organized with the purpose of dismantling those systems of governments which follow a policy of oppression of the poor and neglected people in society. The condition of poverty, and unconcern for the needy, has been on-going for centuries throughout the world. Jesus said, "The poor ye will always have among you" (Matt. 26:11). During recent years, liberation theology has arisen rapidly in Latin America and throughout Central America. Some deplorable economic conditions have been prevalent in these areas for centuries, that is, from the time of the Iberian conquest and also during the various successive systems of governments in control of these extensive areas. It is during the recent years, however, that some scholars have advocated a completely different political and economic policy to meet the present-day economic need in Latin America. In other words, the appalling oppression of millions of people has stimulated a number of writers to ventilate the unfortunate conditions existing in these wide regions, and in turn making pro-

posals for remedial steps in order to end the present misery.

Within Protestantism (which is a minority), Liberationism has gained some support, especially among those who represent the left-wing element in society. This does not imply that all in this minority advocate the overthrow of present-day systems of government. The bona fide liberationists propose the elimination of those patterns of government which are insensitive to human need. They believe there is no other effective way, other than a revolutionary program, in ending such oppression and degradation of the poor and forgotten people in the Latin American nations.

The Roman Catholic leadership has taken no decisive position with regard to liberation theology. The Catholic population in Latin America constitutes the majority in all these areas. The Pope, who is the international head or the spokesman of the 800-million Roman Catholics in the world, while sympathetic in meeting the great need of millions in Latin America, has not, as yet, taken a forceful position in the support of the liberation movement. He has stated, however, that governments there should take remedial action to improve conditions in these areas. The

Pope is hesitant to be officially linked with those who promote liberation theology.

This is clearly understandable in the light of the fact that Roman Catholicism is a world-wide ecclesiastical system; it cannot identify itself with a pattern that is mainly non-religious and economic in its objectives. The logic of Catholicism is against taking such radical steps as those proposed now by the leaders in the liberation movement; and, it should be pointed out that conservative Protestantism cannot support a program that is totally economic in its objective, and one which is non-spiritual in its philosophy.

What Is The Theology of Liberation?

Correctly understood, it has a Marxist base with a very small element of Christianity in order to give some flavor to its materialistic philosophy. Moreover, it is revolutionary in its objective, that is seeking to eliminate all systems of governments which exercise tyranny and a total disregard for the poor and destitute. This was precisely what the Bolsheviks did under Lenin in overthrowing the government of Czarist Russia in 1917.

The present call of the liberationists is to dismantle governments which pursue a policy of oppression of the common people. Now for the analogy: Some of you remember Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks in Russia, who led his party which overthrew the Czar of Russia and instituted the regime of the Communists. The irony of it is that the revolutionary regime of Lenin exercised a much greater tyranny than the former government in the enslavement of the people in Russia.

Likewise, Joseph Stalin, a later successor of Lenin (and a loyal supporter of Lenin), became the most ruthless of all Russian rulers in its history. The enslavement of the Russian people was unparalleled. A few decades later, the ruler of Russia, namely, Nikita Khrushchev, the chairman of the Council of the State, did the astonishing thing of downgrading Stalin, and accusing him of executing millions of Russians; the public statues of Stalin came down. In that same period, competent writers on Russia accused Stalin of the responsibility of putting to death 15 million people during his reign of infamy. The toppling of one system for another type of tyranny usually brings about an even greater pattern of dictatorship. This was experienced in Chile and in Argentina a few decades ago.

The World Council of Churches Supports Political Radicalism

Incredible as it might seem, yet the fact is, that The World Council of Churches provided several hundred thousand dollars to revolutionary elements in Africa. This kind of action taken by The World Council of Churches has led to much opposition to it by some important denominational bodies.

Did Christ give support to those who have favored drastic action, such as that which has been urged by important liberation leaders? They usually refer to the cleansing of the temple by Christ. They support the theory that Christ advocated forceful action against the money-changers and the racketeers who defrauded people in the temple, who had come to exchange their currency from distant places into money used in Judea.

Jesus said that they were making the temple of God into "a den of robbers." The Lord uttered no word about overthrowing the Roman government, and he did not call for political revolution. On the other hand, he told the people, "Give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar and to God that which belongs to God." Those writers who attempt to link Christ with revolution are totally irresponsible and make a false assertion. Every fair-minded person rejects the use of such an analogy by these false teachers.

The Direct Appeal of The Liberationists

Their appeal is openly presented in their writing. Their appeal goes in this manner: Those who believe in justice and fairness must ally themselves with the poor and downtrodden, and, they continually insist that capitalism is the worst form of oppression practiced by governments. Therefore, they propose the dismantlement of capitalism, which is in control of the economic policy of the industrial nations. As our answer, we might state that Socialism is the first cousin of Communism. They openly insist that the poor and the oppressed must share equally with those who have an abundance. But Socialism does not advocate social and political violence or revolution to achieve the objectives. They believe economic problems should be solved by ballots and not bullets. Liberationists seem to move a step nearer to Communism by insisting on the overthrow of capitalism, by violent means, if necessary. Socialism, as yet, has not proposed violence and bloodshed. Let me now illustrate the folly of their

arguments: Some years ago an important group came over here from Communist Russia to study, at close range, American capitalism. They came to Detroit, and other nearby industrial corporations, to see the enslavement of the workers in the giant automobile industries. They saw immediately thousands upon thousands of automobiles in the huge parking areas. Most of the cars were of the large models. The spokesman for the Russian group saw what he thought was the enslavement of the workers. He told the industrial guide as he pointed to the multitude of cars, and he stated it in these words, "Look at the great wealth of the capitalists in this industry!" The response from the American guide was, "These automobiles belong to the men and women working here." No further word was offered by anyone else in the Russian group. In our country no one needs to starve and lack necessary clothes. If a person honestly seeks aid from the government, either federal, state or local organizations, it will be available to help. Obviously, there are some injustices in applying the system of relief. No utopian condition is promised. In the U.S. the middle class is the largest one in our society. To overthrow the American system as the Liberationists insist on doing, would lead to total chaos. The fact is in every state where Communism is in control there are less opportunities and privileges than in our free economy. We have no utopia, but our way of life is infinitely better than the way the society operates under Communism.

About a century ago extremists in Socialism attempted to establish idealistic patterns of life in a number

of areas. These experimental units were to give equality to everyone in such communes. As an American historian, I have evaluated these schemes. While noble in attempt, every one failed, and none continued very long. People in our free enterprise think it is too important to Americans to be traded off for some kind of utopian regulated society. This is the verdict of history. Magical formulas have been rejected.

In a realistic evaluation, Communism has failed. Its 75 years of history provides the answer. In Russia, freedom is taken away. Enslavement of the nation has been the tragic reality. No freedom of speech, press, religion and assembly is provided; neither is there a free and unfettered election held. One free American farmer outproduces the Russian farmer by ten-to-one. Automobiles are mostly possessed by officials of government, and not by individuals as a rule. Efficiency is paralyzed by the endless bureaucracy. We need to think carefully before we listen to the voices of the liberationists who advocate new-fangled theories.

In the history of the world there never has been a time when poverty has been eliminated. All the forms of government have been tried, such as dictatorship, oligarchy, limited government, parliamentary, republican and democratic patterns. None has been wholly successful. Our American system, the federal, has come nearest to satisfying the largest number. Only the kingdom, which Christ will establish following man's day, will be a completely successful

system. It will be the golden age, when "the will of God will be done on earth as it now is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). There is no overall cure within reach by man, where distribution of resources will be even to all. If achieved, as socialistic thinkers have proposed, the very next day inequality would re-appear, and poverty, likewise, would be experienced by many. At the two hundredth anniversary of our Constitution this year, we do well to thank God for the great amount of political and religious freedom which we have experienced during the past two centuries. As a long-time teacher of church and secular history, I have tried to fairly evaluate Liberation Theology. For further study I recommend a recent book by a Latin American writer whose name is Emilio A. Núñez C. He was born and reared in El Salvador, known as the Republic of Salvador. He was minister to the poor in Central America for a number of years. This scholar is not willing to turn his back on the desperate need of the people in Latin America. He has been a teacher in Guatemala City in Guatemala. He realizes that the roots of liberation theology stem from the time of the Iberian conquest of Latin America, including the long period of colonization of that area, and during the subsequent two centuries. The writer is generally objective in his presentation, but he takes a rather mild approach, which is understandable in the light of his love for the people of Latin American. A stronger warning against liberation theology would have been helpful. The writer has a Th.D. from Dallas Theological Seminary.

THE HISTORY OF LIBERALISM IN AMERICA

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

As a long-time professor of History of the United States, particularly Intellectual History, I owe it to our readers to share how liberalism got started in the United States. The college course, known as Intellectual History, seeks to achieve what no other course of study in history is able to interpret objectively. It goes behind the scene, as it were, and seeks to answer the question, why have developments taken place in the manner in which our country has experienced them in history? Early New England has revealed that in the colonial period, a philosophy of faith prevailed. Biblical authority and infallibility were never doubted. This was the way of life which was followed by the Puritans. In fact, they were the pioneers in advancing the intellectual way of life in early America. They had the best schools and the most capable and informed preachers. As the population expanded in the Eastern seaboard in ever-wider areas, the Puritans lost the complete control which they had maintained in earlier decades. Harvard became our earliest higher educational institution. In fact, it was founded six years after the Puritans landed in Massachusetts in 1630. After a number of years Yale was established, and all in all, 8 of our leading higher institutions in America concentrated their studies mainly in theological and classical courses. The Philadelphia Academy had a more secular arrangement, due to the influence of Benjamin Franklin who was not a Puritan. Harvard, in particular, was established to train young men for the ministry, and to promote an intelligent community. In many instances, preachers were presidents of the early institutions. At ~~Harvard~~ and Princeton, Timothy

Dwight and Jonathan Edwards once presided. Every knowledgeable person realizes that Christianity was all-important in the early American colonies. In this period the New England Primer was the basic textbook in the elementary schools. Christian teachings were a vital part of that popular textbook. During a period of 75 years, millions of copies were printed and used in the schools. As we approach the constitutional period, however, deism had spread, and included the elite in society. In fact, two rationalistic religious denominations were launched in the 1780's, namely, the Unitarian, and the Universalist. Neither one has become large during any period in our history—not even in our time are these among the larger denominations. The first Unitarian professor became a member of Harvard's faculty in 1805. For 175 years, orthodoxy prevailed in our earliest institution of higher education. Rationalistic influence was kept out of Yale a few decades longer due to the great leadership of Timothy Dwight. He feared President Jefferson, who held an unorthodox position theologically. He was considered dangerous to our country.

What Contributed to the Expansion of Liberalism in the Late 18th and 19th Centuries?

The two developments which had a major part in expanding liberal thought were: The Industrial Revolution and Charles Darwin's Evolutionary theory of the origin of man. Darwin authored two books—*The Origin of Species*, and *Natural Selection* — in the middle of the 19th century. Many clergymen accepted this new theory, in part at least, including

the well-known Henry Ward Beecher. Theologically considered, it divided members in many of the religious denominations in the country. The scientific society was quick to embrace Darwinism. The theory of evolution had a devastating effect in many spheres, however.

The industrial revolution took on significance also, from 1830 to the end of the past century. It resulted in the rapid urbanization of America. During the two previous centuries, this country was mainly a rural society. The factory system and the large corporations rapidly expanded from 1840 to 1900. While it furnished jobs to several million people, it did, nevertheless, provide a dual effect in the economy. It moved the economy from increased prosperity to an extreme depression. This cycle prevailed during most of the past century. In the large cities, poverty and great hardship became an experience for most urban dwellers. Stability disappeared in society, and economic problems increased phenomenally.

Within this period, resourceful writers appeared who ventilated a number of new problems which had arisen. Both economic and religious writers gravitated to the front in the last third of the past century. Lincoln Steffens wrote on **The Shame of the Cities**. Ida Tarbell depicted in writing, **The Dominance of The Standard Oil Company** under the powerful industrialist, John D. Rockefeller. Thorstein Veblen, the famous economist, wrote on the theory of *l'assise faire*, or the non-interference by the government in the American economy. The Sociologist, Lester Ward, raised his voice in advocating relief from the dominance of the captains in industry.

Leading clergymen entered the arena during the same period. Josiah Strong wrote on **Our Country**. Both Josiah Strong, Washington Gladden, and also Horace Bushnell wrote that religion must not confine itself to the conversion of sinners; it must work to eliminate the appalling conditions of the poor. This was clearly a full implication of the social gospel approach. Rev. Strong said the gospel had such a clear implication in doing this. One famous writer arrived a little later, namely, Charles M. Sheldon, who wrote **In His Steps**. It became the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for the social gospel. Several million copies were sold. Walter Rauchenbusch, a Baptist from Colgate Seminary, became a strong exponent of liberal theology. I am aware of many other economic and religious writers who appeared in the period. The people that I have listed are simply representatives of the many writers in that generation who sought remedies for our many shortcomings in the American society.

Theological liberalism reached a climactic moment when **The Federal Council of Churches in America** was organized in 1908, with 33 denominations participating. It was rather a loosely-organized body, but it served as a precursor to the **National Council of Churches** founded in 1950, and **The World Council of Churches** in 1948. The earlier **Federal Council of Churches** in 1908 put their views into a creed which officially established the social gospel.

What Did The Conservative Groups Do To Counteract the Sweep-through of Liberalism?

During the first half of this century, conservative Bible-believing

groups moved into an organized opposition to the liberal majority. An early publication was known as **The Fundamentals**. Great leaders such as Riley, Rood and Shields, and many others, came to the front and strongly emphasized fundamental biblical doctrines. The World's Christian Fundamentalist organization was launched, and it publicly opposed liberalism. In the middle of this century, **The National Association of Evangelicals** was organized to be the voice speaking for the evangelical bodies. Somehow it has become a rather mild opposition to liberalism in recent years. Moreover, sizable groups split off from the main-line denominations, and developed separate conservative bodies. Some others became independent, and all of them organized educational institutions, seminaries, and Bible colleges, as well as missionary societies. These split-off bodies have achieved a commendable work during the past 50 years. The liberals, however, are mostly in control of a number of the major denominations of the country. These have moved into the orbit of ecumenism more and more. Big mergers of the liberal bodies continue. Fortunately, they do not possess the whole field. Biblical groups are functioning very well throughout the country. Their influence must not be minimized. Some Christians have chosen to remain within the liberal denominations, hoping a change for the better will come to the parent denominational bodies. This is very unlikely. This writer has seen very little evidence of a move to a better spiritual state. These people have sought to avoid a come-out-ism attitude. They are not

supported in the New Testament teachings, however.

The liberals were terribly mistaken before World War I. They openly stated that the kingdom was just around the corner, and they believed the church would witness a complete break-through. Casually considered, it appeared this philosophy had some significance. Nearly every nation was making progress. Education was moving ahead along a wide front. Illiteracy was being erased more and more. In our country, constitutional prohibition became a reality. Non-Christian nations were being reached by strong missionary organizations. Most areas of the world were open to the gospel. Our Congress passed a resolution to outlaw war as a national policy. Women's Suffrage was being widely extended throughout the western world, and democratic governments were expanded. Woodrow Wilson believed the world would be made safe for democracy with the League of Nations created. Since World War I, all this has been changed. A complete reversal has come in our generation. Today one-half of the world's population live under Communism, or extreme leftist governments. Violence and crime are overcoming the world. Alcoholism and drunkenness are on the increase. Our penal institutions are over-crowded. Judges are putting prisoners on parole in order to make room for the great number of criminals sentenced by the present-day courts. Homelife is breaking down. There are nearly as many legal divorces as marriages each year. More than a million unborn are destroyed yearly by abortion, which has been legalized. Immorality

is on the rampage; the number of suicides committed is alarming. Drug addiction is ruining millions of lives. The social gospel did not succeed.

The kingdom did not come through man's ingenuity. Thank God His kingdom will come through Divine power. "The will of God will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Those of us who have followed the prophetic Scriptures have been vindicated. The Scriptures point "to perilous times" as the age ends, when "people shall be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." Violence on earth will be a world-wide condition. Lot's day, and the day of Noah, are being repeated

on a world-wide pattern. Our Lord admonished people to understand the times. Peter, in his writings, warns us about the end-time apostasy. Truly we have witnessed the beginning of the end. The coming of Christ must be near. All the signs are in an agreement for the first time. The Scriptures reveal three areas in which the signs will appear as the end of the age approaches: within the Jewish nation, among the Gentile nations, and within Christendom. Jesus said, "When you see all these things, know it is near, even at the doors" (Mt. 24:33). These signs have appeared simultaneously in our generation.

CRACKS IN THE WATCHTOWER

by John Williamson

Over its century-long history, the Jehovah's Witness cult has grown from a small Pittsburgh Bible study, led by Charles Taze Russell, into a worldwide, international (and now computerized) organization with a well-known system of door-to-door "evangelism" and a record-setting publishing effort. Although the cult's members are commonly known as Jehovah's Witnesses, the organization itself is officially called the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

The Society has suffered several serious upheavals recently that have been raising questions about the group's self-proclaimed subtitle of "Jehovah's organization on earth." Of course, orthodox Christians have been asking these questions for years. Surprisingly, such questions are now being vocalized from members within the confines of the Watchtower. For the first time in the

organization's existence, some of the rank and file are questioning the directives of the leadership, reexamining the Biblical bases of official pronouncements and openly being skeptical of several facets of Watchtower life. Some of this unrest among the Witnesses is of such an ominous nature and proportion that it has the hierarchy concerned.

What are the factors causing so much commotion within the cult?

First, the organization is suffering from a terminal eschatology. The Society has long claimed the year 1914 was the end of the reign of the Gentiles and the year when Christ supposedly returned. They insist this date was the result of meticulous Biblical calculations, exhaustive scholarship and rigorous comparison of various Scriptures. The return happened, according to the Witnesses, but it was an invisible and non-

cataclysmic event. Thus no one actually saw Christ literally returning upon the earth that year, but they believe He did come.

However, the Witnesses still maintain that the generation living at the time of the "Lord's return" (1914) will still be alive to witness the end of the present world order and the ushering in of the Kingdom which will be a monumental, apocalyptic and highly visible event. This doctrine, still taught dogmatically by the Watchtower, carries with it not only the reputation of Jehovah's Witness scholarship but the prestige of an organization claiming sole favor of God upon the earth. Obviously any repudiation of this teaching could have dire repercussions for the cult. But without an outright repudiation, or at least a major alteration, this doctrine will prove fatal as the designated generation dies out without seeing the much-touted spectacular events envisioned by the Witnesses.

This eschatological scheme was responsible for the group purchasing a mansion on the West Coast that was to be used as the home of the resurrected Old Testament saints. Their stated purpose in buying the property was the nearness of the end of the age and the imminent resurrection of these famous Bible characters. After using the structure for accommodating only ordinary Society dignitaries, they eventually sold it. The generation born before 1914 is approaching the end of the normal human life span; and as it continues to die out, so does the demonstrated accuracy of the cult's date setters. Bible-believing Baptists need to wonder what effect this will have on the minds, attitudes and spiritual

concerns of millions of faithful Watchtower adherents as their prophetic clock continues ticking farther and farther away from 1914, and nothing happens.

More recently, the year 1975 was highly publicized in Witness literature as the beginning of the end. The cult's membership growth accelerated rapidly and excitement among the Russellites reached a fever pitch as the fateful year approached. Not surprisingly, the membership number slightly decreased for the first time in the organization's history, when 1975 uneventfully passed from the scene. In its history the group has established several such predictions, naming specific dates when certain spiritually significant events were to transpire. However, the 1914 date has been, and still is, declared the fateful year when the generation of that year will survive the dramatic destruction of the present order. It would seem reasonable to expect that soon an explanation will be issued that attempts to both save the integrity of Watchtower doctrine and at the same time stop this terminal eschatological system from strangling the life out of the cult.

Second, the cult is troubled by a deteriorating unity that has been not only debilitating but embarrassing. They have long held that organic unity is one of the identifying marks of "true" Christianity. Russellites believe and teach that a single earthly organization is the subject of the Lord's high priestly prayer in John 17. "That they may be one" is a plea for Christian wholeness manifested in the last hundred years by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Under four succeeding presidents, the

Watchtower has had monolithic unity enforced with stringent, almost military, discipline. This facade of party unity has grown more and more transparent as some publicized challenges to the cult's centralized authority have erupted. These rebellions have been in some cases the direct result of the unraveling of their eschatology.

In 1980 a major reshuffle of personnel at the top of the Society's hierarchy resulted in several notable figures being excommunicated from the organization. Some of the expulsions were immediate; others were completed several years later. Among the high-ranking officials disfellowshipped was Raymond Franz, nephew of the Society's current president and a former voting member of the Governing Body, the highest authority within the corporation's structure. Loaded with a career of service to the cult, and having worked for many years on the secretive decision-making echelons, Franz published a book in 1983 entitled *Crisis of Conscience* in which he exposed many of the unchristian actions of the organization and brought several of the most embarrassing Watchtower skeletons out of the closet. His vast knowledge of the cult's bureaucracy and technical experience in the organization's operations has given his book a forceful edge in explaining the Watchtower's inner workings, and that has resulted, understandably, in official discouragement from reading the work.

In October of 1984 *Newsweek* published a story about some of the problems the cult had been experiencing. Accompanying the article was a picture of Jehovah's Witnesses

picketing their own headquarters plant in Brooklyn and displaying signs protesting some of the theological decrees of the Society's leadership. These were not orthodox religionists complaining about the group's doctrines; these were rank-and-file Witnesses dissatisfied with their own group's leadership. The once highly trumpeted Watchtower unity has begun to appear more mirage than reality. If this disintegration continues, what effect might it have on the spiritual and Biblical understanding of the individual cult member, especially taking into consideration the Society's own teaching that organic unity is to be equated with divine favor and blessing?

Third, the cult suffers from a defenseless body of irreconcilable doctrine. Although the Russellites deny many of the teachings of fundamental Christianity (literal hell, the Trinity, immortality of the soul), they do hold to a stated orthodox view of the Bible. They claim, as a matter of cardinal doctrine, to believe in an inspired, inerrant and authoritative Scripture in a similar if not identical fashion as fundamentalists. It is just this one piece of common teaching shared with fundamentalism that may, ironically, lead to further disunity and disharmony within the structure. Bible-believing Christians have a point of contact with Jehovah's Witnesses because they both claim to hold to the absolute authority of the Bible in all matters of faith and practice. It should be cautioned, however, that the Watchtower's claim is less real than it first sounds. Pronouncements from Brooklyn are viewed as *de facto* Scripture by many

Russellites; perhaps not so much in theory as in practical application.

Some of the teachings held by the cult seem totally absurd when compared with the Bible and considered with even superficial reasoning. For example, the Watchtower teaches the Holy Spirit is a force, not a person. It ascribes no personality or personal attributes to the Holy Spirit, understanding Him to be a mere personal force (something akin to gravity or electricity). The Witnesses refer to the Holy Spirit as "it." By way of contrast, Christ in John 16:8 and Paul in Romans 5:5 use the unmistakable masculine pronoun in the Greek text while talking about the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, these two references, plus several other similar passages, are cleverly worded to conceal the masculine pronoun in the Society's translation of the Bible. Such an evisceration is done without any textual authority whatsoever. Jesus and Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as "he," while the Watchtower says He is an "it."

The Bible also assigns personal functions to the Spirit that are difficult to be thought of as the actions of a mere force. The Holy Spirit can be grieved and quenched. He also teaches, ordains, speaks, seals and does many other actions associated with a person. It is impossible to reconcile the Watchtower teaching and the plain reading of the Bible on this issue. What does a cult member do when he is confronted by such a ringing dilemma issued by a Biblically knowledgeable questioner? Beginning with the Society's own belief in Scriptural authority, it seems this point and many similar anomalies are a collection of disjointed nightmares for their apologists.

At no time in its history has any religious group been more susceptible to sincere evangelistic efforts of Bible-believing Christians. The upheavals within the Society are by no means temporary or harmless. They touch upon the cornerstones of Watchtower presuppositions and long-cherished theological notions.

It is an organization, with millions of followers around the world, with an eschatological-ticking time bomb, self-destructing disunity and a body of writings that clearly has difficulty contending with fundamental scholarship. Within the walls of the Watchtower are the sprouting seeds of degeneration and destruction.

Sadly, however, there are few organized efforts to reach the Witnesses with the true gospel. There are fundamental Baptist mission efforts being geared toward Mormons, Jews, Indians, mentally retarded, college students, teens, Hispanics, Muslims and many more groups. Yet, as time relentlessly marches away from 1914, the Witnesses are questioning more and more aspects of their own organization, and fewer and fewer answers are being supplied by Brooklyn. Now is the time for Bible-centered mission efforts and evangelistic thrusts to concentrate on the Witnesses and show them the true light of Christ. There has never been a more propitious opportunity.

However, several unique problems certainly face such mission efforts. One of the most formidable difficulties is the lack of any geographic concentrations of the cult's adherents. Mormon missionary efforts, for example, center in Utah, the heartland of the LDS Church. College campuses have been the hub of programs designed for students, with ob-

vious logic to the selection of that location. But Russellites are not confined to any one area. The Society has a headquarters complex in Brooklyn involving several Kingdom Farms that are scattered in the Northeast; but other than these isolated pockets of the cult's population, Watchtower adherents are distributed throughout all corners of the globe, creating a substantial problem for organized mission efforts.

The difficulties of reaching Witnesses are further complicated by the cult's social closeness. Society members are discouraged from establishing friendships with people outside the Watchtower, making "bridge evangelism" virtually impossible. The Society encourages a total diet of its own literature. Thus literature and gospel tracts have tough sledding against the Watchtower's presses, which spit out swarms of pamphlets, mountains of books and an avalanche of tracts.

The impact of "professional" mission work directed toward the Watchtower is small compared to the potential influence of an individual Bible believer. What organized efforts can do only with extreme difficulty, an individual Bible believer can accomplish with relative ease—come

face to face with a Jehovah's Witness, for they are a mission field that literally makes housecalls. By opening his door, a Bible-believer comes eyeball to eyeball with a Witness who has stepped out of the isolation of the cult to engage an unsuspecting resident in a conversation about the Bible. It is a golden opportunity to speak to the cultist while he is without the support of his peers.

The Watchtower teaches no spiritual security to its followers. A Jehovah's Witness is never sure of his eternal life; it is a future hope—never a present reality. Of course, the lack of security is rooted in a system of salvation based on knowledge and works, not grace.

Never in over one hundred years has there been more reason for a Witness to question his spiritual situation. Never before has such chaos existed within the Watchtower system. At no other time have they been more bewildered over the generation of 1914. Such are the individuals who knock on doors ready to discuss the Bible. And they, themselves, are in need of the true witness of a Christian believer.

Mr. Williamson is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Harford, New York. Used with permission by the Baptist Bulletin, April 1987.

NOTEWORTHY

FILMMAKERS ARE ADAPTING THE BIBLE TO HOME VIDEO TAPES according to an article in the *Whittier Daily News Weekender* for January 29, 1987. The article reports that "Hanna-Barbera, the folks that brought you 'The Flintstones' and 'Smurfs,' has released the first six animated installments of 'The

Greatest Adventure: Stories From the Bible,'" and plans to release some 20 more biblical videos this fall. President Joe Barbera was quoted as saying, "I don't think people are reading the Bible anymore and video is one way to get it into the home." But what kind of a Bible is going into homes with these video tapes? The ar-

ticle says, "The tapes, targeted for 2 to 12 year olds, provide a playful and engaging interpretation of famous Bible stories. For instance, you'll never find this line in the Bible, said by a stowaway on the Ark: 'I never thought I'd miss land so much. I even hope I find sand in my spinach.' But it's there in NOAH AND THE ARK." The production chases spirit, not literalness. Barbera threw in some of his own cartoon touches. He figured that an ark 700 feet long would spring some leaks, so he had a rhino plug one with his own horn until a son of Noah could cork it. The Devil and his crowd are certainly busy seeking to pollute the Word of God in every way possible. Christian parents will need to be especially on guard against this new effort—and others similar to it—which seek to poison the minds of children.

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NEWS & VIEWS
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SOME HAVE ASKED ABOUT THE "ARMSTRONG EMPIRE" and how it is doing since the death of the founder. There have been some financial problems, but there doesn't seem to be any let-up on the spread of errors. Some of Armstrong's last book have been printed in serial form by the new publisher, Joseph W. Tkach. There are still the usual cult claims such as "we only have the truth," and "there was no true word from the Lord until 1953," when THEY proclaimed it. According to this cult, everyone is wrong and if a person wants the truth there is only one place to get it. Of course they are right about that because the Bible is our only source of God's truth. You will never get it from The Worldwide Church of Armstrong! E.E.

NEW BOOKS IN STOCK AVAILABLE FROM OUR OFFICE

RAISED IMMORTAL, Resurrection & Immortality in the New Testament by Murray J. Harris. The author was Professor of Biblical Greek and New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Illinois, and here presents a very complete and scholarly study on this most important subject. Not for devotional reading—this book will make you think. Well documented. 304 pp. \$10.95

DEMONS, WITCHES, AND THE OCCULT by Josh McDowell & Don Streart. A pocket guide exposing the real workings of the occult realm. 96 pp. \$1.95

THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES' NEW TESTAMENT by Robert H. Countess. Out of print for some time, this important tool is once again available. 136 pp. \$8.95

MARANATHA! by Harry Bultema. A careful study on the premillennial return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Read, and understand the many prophecies better. 364 pp. \$12.95

THE ADVERSARY by Mark I. Bubeck. The Christian versus demon activity. This study concerns the battle in which each believer is engaged. 160 pp. \$5.95

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE JESUITS by Edmond Paris. The author exposes the Vatican's involvement in world politics, intrigues, and the fomenting of wars throughout history. 206 pp. \$5.95

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLES by Jeff Godwin. The truth about Rock Music. Here the author takes away the curtain of lies, ignorance and misconceptions about this modern form of "music." 352 pp. \$7.95

OVERCOMING THE ADVERSARY by Mark I. Bubeck. It is the Christian's responsibility to claim the victory because no enemy—not even Satan—is strong enough to overcome the power of the Holy Spirit within. 138 pp. \$5.95

HISTORY AND CHRISTIANITY by John Warwick Montgomery. A strong, convincing and stirring defense of the faith by one of Christianity's most able defenders. 110 pp. \$3.95

**THE PIED PIPER OF THE PEN-
TESOSTAL MOVEMENT** by
Wilson Erwin. The spiritual power of
the new world order, which is called
The New Age Movement. 80 pp.
\$5.50

**HE CAME TO SET THE CAP-
TIVES FREE** by Rebecca Brown,
MD. Elaine was one of the top wit-
ches in the United States, and many
satanists under her, clashed with Dr.
Brown who stood against them alone.
Elaine was one who turned from her
master, Satan, to the Master of Dr.
Brown, the Lord Jesus Christ. A sur-
prising, and sometimes shocking,
revelation of the clash of powers in
the spiritual world around us. 288 pp.
\$7.50

**HOW CAN A GOD OF LOVE SEND
PEOPLE TO HELL?** by John Ben-
ton. In plain, direct language, this
book deals with the many questions
people ask about hell. 96 pp. \$2.50

**THE VATICAN-MOSCOW-WASH-
INGTON ALLIANCE** by Avro
Manhattan. This book is about the
religious-political objectives and
nature of the most recent activities of
these powers, including the rise of the
Liberation Theology movement in
South America. 382 pp. \$7.95

**THE SIGN OF THE LAST DAYS —
WHEN?** by Carl Olof Jonsson &
Wolfgang Herbst. Thoroughly
documented evidence in this book
supplies the answers to serious ques-
tions that many are asking about the
"end of the world." 272 pp. \$7.95

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NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE DISCERNER

Some of you have relatives, friends, and also pastors who would enjoy reading *The Discerner*. Why not send in a subscription for them for \$2.00 a year? The publication has pertinent information on the Cults which will be appreciated.

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PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

John E. Dahlin, Editor

QUESTION . . . Will the Liberation Movement Make Serious Inroads in the United States?

ANSWER . . . Since the Liberation Movement has arisen out of Latin America, it is doubtful that it will have an equal expansion in the United States. In the Latin American area, conditions of extreme poverty and oppression prevail. The movement would logically have a strong appeal to millions of people who are downtrodden and live in daily misery. In our country where freedom and enlightenment are much farther advanced, it seems unlikely that it will be as effective in our country. Its appeal is more limited here.

QUESTION . . . Will liberal theology continue to expand here as it has done during the past century?

ANSWER . . . Liberal theology has had a great impact within the whole religious sphere in America since the middle of the past century. In this generation, however, the conservative and Bible-believing groups have expanded widely, and they are well organized. One can scarcely envision the same sweep of liberals in our generation when millions of dedicated believers have a very great influence throughout the country in contrast with the past century. The conservative element has recaptured the leadership in America's largest Protestant denomination, the 13-million Southern Baptist.