

The Discerner



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AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

Editorial.....	2
<i>William A. BeVier</i>	
Forget America! Teach World Class History!	3
<i>Berit Kjos</i>	
The Metamorphosis Of The World-Wide Church Of God	5
<i>Roy Knuteson</i>	
What's Going On In Education?	8
<i>William A. BeVier</i>	
Book Reviews	11
Notes Of Encouragement.....	18

The Discerner

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

In this issue of The Discerner we welcome back two individuals who have written for us in the past.

Berit Kjos does a great amount of excellent, well-documented writing on a variety of current issues of interest to Bible-believing Christians. In addition to her articles she has written a number of books, several of which we stock. We anticipate featuring more of her articles in the future, especially one on the new Bible "translation" (a careless use of the word) titled The Message.

Dr. Roy E. Knuteson, a member of our Board of Reference, is featured with an article updating the Worldwide Church of God (WCG). Veteran readers of The Discerner will recognize his name from past writings. The changes in the WCG are amazing, but for the time being R.A.S. will still consider the group a cult. Former members of the WCG have contacted us warning that they fear the changes are only cosmetic and designed to make the WCG more acceptable to evangelical Christians. If so, this makes the WCG even more spiritually dangerous than in the past. Certainly the changes being made, especially in The Plain Truth, is disconcerting to older members of the WCG. Many of them no longer know what to believe.

I invite your attention to this issue's book reviews. As our continuing readers know,

we do not recommend all the books we review. The reviews are for information purposes.

For those who have inquired, our new catalog is being prepared and we expect to have it published in a few weeks. We still have copies of our 1993-1994 Catalog available for those who might want it. It lists most of the books, booklets, and tracts we have in stock. If you do not find an item you want in the Catalog, let us know. We have added a number of items not listed and we are sometimes able to obtain other desired literature which we do not have in stock at the moment.

At the last meeting of our Board of Directors we, as we always do at these meetings, reviewed the financial status of R.A.S. Our Treasurer's report clearly indicated the ministry could not continue without the many gifts of individuals and churches. The literature we have available is on a self-sustaining basis. But this does not provide for our rent, utilities, insurance, equipment, etc. needed to operate the office. These things must be paid for from financial support of many people. For this we are grateful to you and to God, the ultimate supplier. Since we are now being staffed by volunteers, we have no expense for salaries. We still need a full-time Office Manager, but because we cannot afford to pay for such a person, several individuals who have contacted us

have had to decline to pursue the matter. Please continue to pray for the ministry of R.A.S. and look for opportunities to tell

others about us. Contact us if you think we can be of any help to you or to others. 1 Peter 5:8-9.

FORGET AMERICA! TEACH WORLD CLASS HISTORY!

By Berit Kjos

We can't teach that only America is good," said Seema Desai, a tenth-grader who moved from India to Florida in 1993. "That would hurt my feelings."¹

Seema had joined an impassioned war-led by the local teachers' union—against three Lake County school board members who wanted Florida schools to emphasize America's unique merits. Seeking to overturn a requirement that would "indoctrinate" students with the *un*-politically correct notion that America is best, the union had sued the school board. Such *ethnocentric* teaching, it argued, emphasizes one culture over another. Therefore it breaks a state law that requires multicultural education.

Western values have failed us; it's time to seek global models in the world's earth-centered cultures.

Does multiculturalism rule out loyalty to our country? Apparently so. Most parents still believe that multicultural education simply helps students understand other cultures and people. In reality, it trains students to view the world and its people from a *global* and *pantheistic* perspective rather than from a *national* and Judeo-Christian perspective. In other words, it is designed to bring about a *paradigm shift*—a cultural transformation toward a radical new way of thinking,

believing, and relating to "our global family."

Neither nationalism nor monotheism (belief in one God) fits this new *paradigm*. Instead, children must either discard their traditional beliefs or stretch them to include the world's pantheistic, polytheistic beliefs and values. This *paradigm shift* will supposedly prepare students for life in the 21st century "global village" envisioned by utopian social engineers who are testing the latest techniques in behavior modification on our children.

"Multicultural education...strives to integrate multiethnic and global perspectives," wrote Christine Bennet in *Comprehensive Multicultural Education*, a popular textbook for student teachers. Its goal is not to teach factual history, but to "challenge [the student's] cultural assumptions" and mold global citizens with an "emotional commitment to the fundamental unity of all humans...."²

In other words, a new commitment to global unity must supercede commitments to God and country, and history lessons must reflect this *paradigm shift*. The new National Standards for History fit the bill.

Imagine an outline for the teaching of American history in which George Washington makes only a fleeting appearance and is never described as our first president. Or in which the foundings of the Sierra Club and the National Organization for Women are considered noteworthy events, but the first gathering of the U.S. Congress is

not....

This is, in fact, the version of history set forth in the soon-to-be released National Standards for United States History,

wrote Lynne Cheney, former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, in an October 20, 1994, Wall Street Journal article titled, "The End of History." She continued:

The general drift of the document becomes apparent when one realizes that not a single one of the 31 standards mentions the Constitution....

The authors tend to save their unqualified admiration for people; places and events that are politically correct.... To understand West Africa, students are encouraged to "analyze the achievements and grandeur of Mansa Musa's court...."

Such celebratory prose is rare when the document gets to American history itself. In the U.S. context, the kind of wealth that Mansa Musa commanded is not considered a good thing.

African and Native American societies, like all societies, had their failings, but one would hardly know it from National Standards. Students are encouraged to consider Aztec "architecture, skills, labor systems and agriculture." But not the practice of human sacrifice... those who were 'pursuing the revisionist agenda' no longer bothered to conceal their "great hatred for traditional history."

Preventing certification will be a formidable task. Those wishing to do so will have to go up against an academic establishment that revels in the kind of politicized history that characterizes much of the National Standards.

Gary Nash, a member of the panel that wrote the U.S. History Standards, represents the academic bureaucracy charged with training America's youth. His

debate with Lynne Cheney on MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour on October 26, 1994, highlights the two opposing *paradigms* in American culture.

Cheney: "There is very little sense here of our nation's greatness, of our progress.... It is a very grim and gloomy picture of the American past...."

Nash: "The *hundreds of teachers*, and the *hundreds of historians* from every part of the country who were collaborators and co-authors of this document would truly disagree that this is a gloomy dark picture...."

C: "It is just astonishing to me that a document in which Robert E. Lee doesn't appear [and] Ulysses S. Grant makes one appearance, that there would be 19 references to McCarthyism. It begins to give you a feeling of lack of balance...."

"We are asked to look at King Mansa Musa, an African king, and to admire his wealth. The point is that we don't hold everyone to the same standard. When we look at a phenomenon in another country we say, "Oh that was wonderful..." when we look at it in this country, it becomes an object of derision...."

N: "There are *hundreds and thousands of people who have reviewed this book, who have never raised that objection*. We have sent out over six thousand copies of five drafts of this book for review to every corner of this country. And this is the first criticism of this sort...."

C: "The fact that Mr. Nash didn't receive a lot criticism, perhaps *speaks for the state of history....*"

She is right. In the past, American history taught children appreciation for their country. The latest social studies texts bring shame and anger. Their blend of historical personalities, multicultural experiences, and politicized interpretations were selected to communicate a politically

correct message: that Western values have failed us; it's time to seek global models in the world's earth-centered cultures.

In Florida's battle for freedom to teach historical *facts*, the lawsuit is still pending. If the teacher's union wins, the real losers will be the children who will never know why America was called the land of the free.

¹ Deborah Sharp, "A Culture Class Divides Florida," *USA Today*, May 18, 1994.

² Christine Bennet, Comprehensive Multicultural Education (City: Allyn and Bacon, 1990); 12.

For more information about the multicultural and global education, read Your Child and the New Age and Under the Spell of Mother Earth. Available through R.A.S. (800) 562-9153.

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE WORLD-WIDE CHURCH OF GOD

By Roy E. Knuteson, Ph.D.

Thirty-three years ago, I wrote an article for The Discerner on Herbert W. Armstrong and The World-Wide Church of God (June 1962). That exposé, along with two others, was reprinted in tract form and offered for years by Religion Analysis Service as a critique of this cult.

In that article, we highlighted the many errors propagated by Herbert W. Armstrong and his son, Garner Ted, on "The World Tomorrow" daily radio broadcast and in the pages of The Plain Truth magazine which was read by millions world-wide. We noted that Armstrong believed that he was the only one on planet earth who was preaching the true gospel of the kingdom. He openly denied the Trinity, and skirted around the question of whether or not Jesus was indeed God in human flesh.

The new birth was declared to occur at the resurrection, and Armstrong claimed that Jesus was born again in the resurrection, and therefore no one could know they are

saved now. No one, he said over and over again, has ever gone to heaven, and hell was simply death and annihilation for those outside his true church.

In addition to all that heresy, Armstrong preached very persuasively the British-Israelism doctrine that the United States and Great Britain were the subjects of major Bible prophecies and that we are really Israelites and don't know it. We are a part of the ten lost tribes, he said. He believed and taught that Adolph Hitler was the coming antichrist of the Revelation. This, coupled with his sabbatarian beliefs, including the observances of Jewish holy days, and the demand for three annual tithes made him the "Mr. Confusion" of all the cults.

Theological Gyration

Today, some thirty years later, there has been an almost unbelievable turn-about in the organization that Armstrong headed

until his death in 1986. Under the leadership of Joseph Tkach, Sr., Armstrong's hand-picked successor, remarkable changes have taken place recently that must be sincerely and openly noted.

The World-Wide Church of God has publicly admitted many of the errors of Herbert Armstrong and now confesses that they are receiving new understanding of biblical doctrines, and are willing to change many of their previous convictions and statements.

These changes include an open acknowledgment of the full deity of Jesus Christ. He is now proclaimed to be God, equal to the Father, and happily He is exalted in every issue of their magazine as Lord and Savior. Recent issues of The Plain Truth have quoted extensively from recognized evangelical scholars on such biblical subjects as salvation, grace, faith, and the authority of Scripture. This would never have been allowed in Armstrong's day.

The church has also renounced British-Israelism and have withdrawn all of Armstrong's books on this, and other subjects. In addition, they have recently rescinded their forced tithing system as being without New Testament support. No longer do they advocate Old Testament dietary laws including abstinence from the eating of pork and shellfish.

The World-Wide Church of God now preaches the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ as the confirming evidence of the efficacy of Christ's death for our sins. Joseph Tkach, the Pastor-General, teaches a clear message of salvation by faith alone, and he understands the biblical doctrine of justification as being a judicial declaration of God which affects our position before the Lord for all time—past, present and future. The Plain Truth magazine now reads as an evangelical tract on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each issue urges the

readers to personally receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is amazing and wonderful!

Heaven and hell are real places in their renewed theology. They believe in eternal punishment for the unsaved and everlasting bliss for all born-again people. Jesus is pictured in the third heaven as our high priest, advocate, and intercessor, just as the Bible teaches.

The World-Wide Church of God is no longer considered the only true church and now proper recognition is given to the universal body of Christ, of which all believers are members. In fact, the church now accepts "alien baptism" from other churches as long as it is by immersion, and was done after a proper confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

Physical Changes

The church discontinued the daily radio program some years ago, and has also discontinued publishing the Good News magazine which was primarily sent to members of the church. They have also closed the Pasadena, California and England campuses of Ambassador University and the school is now located in Big Sandy, Texas. It is reported that they have sold their jet airplanes and that the entire operation will soon move to Texas.

All of this change has not come without a great cost. The church has lost a number of their members and several splits have occurred, as previous leaders from within the organization have claimed the mantle of Herbert Armstrong and have organized rival church organizations to propagate his distinctive teachings. The church has gone through and is now experiencing a lot of turmoil, as you can imagine.

According to a Los Angeles Times report, giving has dropped off approximately 30 percent in recent months, although their annual receipts still are over one hundred

million dollars. All church offerings are sent directly to Pasadena and the churches are financed from there in Seventh-day Adventist style. According to a leader in their local congregation in Fort Collins, Colorado, the churches are now given greater autonomy and are even being encouraged to build or buy their own buildings. This has never happened before as they have always used rented facilities, such as public auditoriums. We applaud these amazing changes and view the World-Wide Church of God as inching toward evangelical orthodoxy in a remarkable and efficient manner.

Areas Of Concern

The Plain Truth magazine is still sent free of charge to multiplied millions of "subscribers" world-wide in many translations. It contains well-written and timely articles on a host of subjects that are of interest to Christians everywhere. It must be read with discernment, however, as there are critical theological errors that still show up in each issue.

One of these is their understanding of the personality of the Holy Spirit of God. They still do not believe the Spirit is a separate person in the divine Trinity. They now have two Persons in the Godhead, but deny a third. Joseph Tkach, writing in the May, 1995 issue of their magazine, states that the Holy Spirit is "dynamic, active, and bears fruit" (page 1). But, he denies the Spirit's personality and considers Him to simply be a force or power of Jesus Christ instead of a distinct person, as Jesus plainly taught in John 14:16-18.

Baptism still seems to be viewed as essential for salvation, although the current issue of their magazine calls baptism "an outward symbol of accepting Jesus Christ as personal Savior" (ibid., page 20). This doctrine needs serious clarification because

if they still view baptism as essential to salvation, they have added "righteous works," and this is condemned in Galatians 1, and refuted in Titus 3:5 and Ephesians 2:8-9.

The church still holds to Saturday as the correct day of worship, although they have relaxed their rules about what activities, if any, are appropriate on each "sabbath." Local members are struggling with these new rules after decades of legalistic teaching. This change has resulted in a new attitude toward those of us who believe that Sunday is the New Testament day of worship. They still observe the Jewish "holy days," such as Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, when the membership is encouraged to attend one of their many campsites, such as the large one near Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, which attracts thousands each year for a week-long series of meetings. However, they now view these "holidays" as "reminders of God's amazing gifts to His people" (ibid., page 1).

Today the church teaches the literal return of Jesus Christ to reign and rule in a world-wide millennial kingdom. They no longer denounce the "rapture of the church" as Armstrong did, they simply do not address the subject. Perhaps they will as they continue to publish their "new understandings" of scriptural truth.

Cult-watchers, such as Religion Analysis Service and others, rejoice over these remarkable changes and pray that soon this church will step fully into the main-stream of biblical orthodoxy.

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WHAT'S GOING ON IN EDUCATION?

By William A. BeVier

Recently, I was called on to make a presentation on "Trends Today: Cults, Churches, Society and Schools." This covers most every aspect of our lives and I would like to touch on a most important one to all of us... "what's going on in Education?" This has been my vocation and ministry for 36 years and is an important subject to me.

Our newspapers, magazines and periodicals are filled with stories of: violence in schools; outside influences on basic education; lowering of standards; lack of teaching basic subjects; no disciplinary action; multiculturalism; lack of interest in learning, etc. Let's take a look at each area.

Violence In Schools

Every day we read or hear in news accounts of children and teachers being attacked by other children, teachers and school staff, or "outsiders." Unfortunately, mankind's sinful nature is in abundant evidence to the point where security officers and metal detectors are necessary in many schools and bus monitors are a present force on school buses. Teachers' lives are also in jeopardy by attacks from students or former students. There was a recent incident in our area where a teacher and his young son were kidnapped by a disgruntled former student. Extortion is common among even grade schoolers. Guns and knives have to be taken away from students bringing them to school, to be used for revenge, display or protection.

Outside Influences On Education

All sorts of programs, training sessions, films, etc. are brought into the public schools during prime teaching time. Attendance is required, no choice is given. There is: "Diversity Training," "Sensitivity

Sessions," "Reconditioning Therapy," "Behavior Modification and Hypnotherapy." Sex education courses are being taught to students as young as kindergarten; New Age globalism is being taught, "Global citizenship is being taught to kids instead of American citizenship" stated Dr. Wm. M. Bowen, Jr.¹; atheistic evolution is taught by a large majority of the scientific community, as Dr. Duane Gish remarked in his work, Evolution: The Fossils Say, NO! "Non-theistic religion is being taught in most public schools, colleges and universities in the United States. It has become our unofficial state-sanctioned religion."² Humanism is taught in schools which includes values

Multicultural education is a system in which everyone wins a place in the sun without earning it.

clarification and is undermining our Christian values and Christian homes. Books, X-rated ones, are being promoted in shopping mall bookstores and in public and school libraries.³ Sensitivity trainers are going into colleges and university campuses to conduct seminars and workshops charging \$1,000-\$8,000 per day. These people are not part of the faculty and student attendance is frequently mandatory. These are just a few of the "outside influences" assaulting the education of children on both the primary and secondary level.

Lowering Of Standards

The lowering of standards, both academically and morally, has greatly affected the American student. Dr. Leland Ryken, Chairman of the English

Department at Wheaton College, makes a number of statements concerning Christian students today:

Our young people have been products of a massive self-esteem movement. Several years ago, a group of American high school students took a math test that was also taken by students from a dozen other countries. In addition to taking the test, all 13 groups filled out a self-assessment form indicating how well they thought they had done on the test. The American group ranked first in the self-confidence inventory and last on the test.⁴

Grades have been allowed to skyrocket in spite of a decline of learning. Not all students fall into this category but the trend of "not having a love of learning and having attitudes and habits toward learning affects nearly every aspect of college life."⁵ Some "Christian" schools are "watering down" courses—less Bible exposition, taking Bible courses out of the curriculum, changing doctrinal statements to be less definite.

The lowering of our moral standards starts with the kindergarten-age child. The lack of discipline is seen in the classroom and the emphasis is placed on self-esteem, taught by teachers who are controlled at every turn to lead children away from Christian values, prayer, and most of all, away from God. As David Bobb, Jr., Hillsdale College, said: "All is tolerated in the relativistic worldview except Biblical convictions, the very beliefs upon which this nation was founded. To denude the public square of Christianity is to deny our heritage."⁶

Lack Of Teaching Basic Subjects

Human relations is taught instead of "reading, writing and arithmetic"; entertainment, not education is the order of the day; field trips, nature studies, and athletics are more a part of the curriculum than classroom courses in basic education. Many textbooks are no longer objective or

factual. The purpose of writers is to be "PC" (politically correct). For example, Columbus is now a scoundrel, George Washington a womanizer, etc. Florida battled for freedom to teach historical facts in a lawsuit.⁷ Christine Bennet in Comprehensive Multicultural Education, a popular textbook of student teachers, says the goal is not to teach factual "but to challenge [the students'] cultural assumptions and mold global citizens...."⁸ Even Christian schools are trying to "incorporate" the latest of the world's ideas into their teaching. "Distance education" is a new development in schools. Computers become the primary link between teachers and students, they are "tele-learners."

No Disciplinary Action

There is a lack of control in many schools today. Demonstrations are common, even in grade schools, for most every reason. Walk-outs are the "in thing" where students simply walk out of school in protest over the slightest difference. The lack of disciplinary action on college and university campuses is seen almost weekly on the evening news. This is especially noted among athletes but is also true of faculty and staff.

Recently, at the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University, (both public, tax-supported universities), copies of official student newspapers were stolen and destroyed because groups of minority students objected to the papers' contents. The administration of the universities did nothing, even when they learned who was responsible. Students now know it's acceptable to steal and destroy without punishment. Students caused disturbances on Cornell and Stanford campuses and won concessions from the administrators with no reprisals. Even in Christian schools, disciplinary action is often relegated to counselors and psychologists. Standards of conduct are being lowered to accommodate those who haven't had training in the home.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is not just helping students understand other cultures and people but strives to integrate multi-ethnic and global perspectives. It is a buzz word for today's liberals and "anti's," i.e., anti-national, anti-capitalist, anti-Western and anti-Christian. It is also a shifting of or changing traditional beliefs and values. Factual history is changed to teach that Western values have failed us and America isn't the best! Multicultural education is a system in which everyone wins a place in the sun without earning it. There has been an elimination of tests of competence as the basis for awards. All are entitled to an "A" in spite of different qualities of work.

Getting rid of traditional morals and standards has given homosexuals an inroad on public and private school campuses. Schools such as Northeastern University and Rutgers State University have actively recruited homosexual faculty and one even has an Assistant Dean for homosexual students. Over 150 colleges and universities have policies prohibiting discrimination based on "sexual preference." Gay/lesbian dorms are established on many campuses. One state university stated that students with "strong religious backgrounds" should not consider going into social work.

What Can We Do?

First—remember that God is Sovereign! Let God be God. He controls our universe and our lives. 1 Chron. 29:11; Psa. 22:28; 135:6, 7; Prov. 16:4; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:3-5; 1 Tim. 6:15.

Second—stand fast in the doctrine of the Word of God. Gal. 5:1; 1 Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:13; 1 Thess. 3:8; 2 Thess. 2:15.

Third—equip yourself with the armor of God and with the meat of the Word. Rom. 13:12; 1 Cor. 3:1, 2; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:11, 13; Heb. 5:12-14.

Fourth—pray for and support our good, sound Christian schools. Many are struggling and some are having to close from lack of students and lack of financial support. Christian parents need to consider the choice of Christian versus Secular education.

Notes

¹ Berit Kjos, Your Child and the New Age.

² Duane Gish, Evolution: The Fossils Say No!.

³ Pro Family Forum, pamphlet, "X-Rated Children's Books."

⁴ Printed speech given to Northwestern College Faculty, "The Crisis in Learning," February, 1995.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Campus magazine, Winter 1995.

⁷ USA Today, May 18, 1994.

⁸ Christine Bennet, Comprehensive Multicultural Education.

Other Sources

Bert Thompson, "Can America Survive the Fruits of Atheistic Evolution?", Pro Family Forum, 8-page fold-out pamphlet.

Lottie Beth Hobbs, "Are We Going Full Speed Backward to Paganism?", Pro Family Forum.

BOOK REVIEW

To Hell And Back By Maurice S. Rawlings, M.D.

Reviewed by Leslie E. Buege

Dr. Maurice Rawlings is a specialist in cardiovascular disease at the Diagnostic Center and area hospitals of Chattanooga. He was the personal physician at the Pentagon for the Joint Chiefs of Staff Generals Marshall, Bradley, Patton and Dwight Eisenhower before he became President of the United States. He has taught at various medical schools and hospitals and conducted courses for doctors and nurses in many countries. Dr. Rawlings has specialized in teaching methods for the retrieval of patients from sudden death at the National Teaching Facility of the American Heart Association. His list of credentials goes on.

Dr. Rawlings and his wife, Martha, have five children and eleven grandchildren. He said he has semi-retired to "smell the roses" but that "some of the roses don't smell so good." In this book, Dr. Rawlings shares his findings on how he hopes to make "life's roses smell a lot better."

To Hell And Back is the fourth book Dr. Rawlings has written. It is a continuation of "A Glimpse of Glory" which was first televised on WSMV-TV out of Nashville and a sequel to his book Beyond Death's Door. Contributions for much of the background information came from John Weldon, John Ankerberg, Dave Hunt and Tal Brooke. Dr. Rawlings has been a guest on *The John Ankerberg Show* several times as a Christian authority on the subject of near-death experiences.

The chapter contents of the book are:

1. Glimpses Into The Afterlife
2. Resuscitated Collections
3. Heaven And The Angel Of Light
4. Hell Is Just Plain Hell

5. Has Hell Disappeared?
6. Near-Death Experiences
7. Out-Of-The-Body Experiences
8. Cosmic Consciousness
9. The Arrival Of The New Age
10. The Abode Of Glory
11. The Search For Meaning

In writing this book, Dr. Rawlings says he would like to identify with his hero Luke, another physician, who "carefully investigated everything from the beginning," and then wrote "an orderly account for you...so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught."

In his preface, Dr. Rawlings writes:

The purpose of this book is simply to expose the negative [near-death] cases, those secreted, embarrassing cases found primarily during resuscitative procedures, during the heat of battle for survival, the time when nothing is concealed, the time when the psychologists and psychiatrists who write most of the books on the subject are absent from the scene.

He says that almost none of the numerous authors investigating near-death experiences report unpleasant cases. By reporting only the positive and glorious cases, they are saying in effect that it is safe to die—there is no hell. This belief has created the glorious counseling that is sometimes given at the bedside of many dying patients.

But Dr. Rawlings believes that "if negative cases can be readily demonstrated, cases disturbing enough to permanently change lives, then a place like hell would seem

reasonable. And if hell is possible, then it may not be safe to die.”

Dr. Rawlings presents case studies of near death experiences that he has documented as well as those that other professional people have made from on-the-scene interviews while CPR was in progress. He has found himself running counter to the grain of other authors on the subject by exposing the negative cases. He says a “bitter debate thus rages among authors over the existence of hell—or no hell—in clinical death reports.”

Several interesting reasons are given why the negative cases aren’t being discovered by most authors. By denying the negative cases that are discovered, the “hell” experiences, New Agers find support for their anti-Christian beliefs. The good experiences usually describe the person passing through a tunnel of light or being drawn toward a bright light. Dr. Rawlings explains that many of these experiences are deceptions used by Lucifer to falsely teach that it is safe to die and that everyone goes to heaven, even without Christ. He writes:

More recently, however, the New Age gospel has thoughtfully bypassed the need for reincarnation by introducing the new concept of the “Omega Point,” based entirely on the homogeneously positive or glorious near-death experiences which show a direct passage into a heaven-for-all with no karma.

Dr. Rawlings lists an eight step sequence for a typical good clinical death experience. He says the bad experience may miss a step or two and alter the sequence. Different steps may be induced by drugs, but the sequence cannot. He says:

Most psychic researchers believe the light [at the end of the tunnel] represents a common compassionate force of unconditional love existing for all who die regardless of faith, a force where nothing negative is ever found.

I believe that Dr. Rawlings correctly identifies the being of light in many cases as being Satan or one of his angels masquerading as an angel of light or a minister of righteousness (2 Cor 11:14). I found it an unusual coincidence with what I recently learned about the word “Lucifer.” It comes from Jerome’s Latin Bible, the Vulgate, in Isaiah 14.12. It is the Latin word for morning star. This word was used to refer to Venus, the morning star, “the shining one,” “the light bearer.” So, if Satan could convince people that there is no judgment or accountability at death, then there would be no need to trust in Christ—and the Gospel of the grace of God would become irrelevant.

Dr. Rawlings writes:

A typical [near-death] description involves a beautiful light at the end of a very dark tunnel. Many Christians were convinced that the figure of light they encountered was Jesus because they saw him on a cross...”

This experience would be suspicious to most born again believers. He continues by writing:

Remarkably, others saw the same tunnel and the apparent light turn into a horrible ring of fire, the light becoming inexplicably evil, convincing them that they had been to hell and back, an unheralded failure, the ultimate bane of existence.

To Hell And Back is a book that exposes the deception that lies behind most near-death experiences that are reported and explains why the “hell” experiences are not being reported. His stories are plentiful with humor dispersed throughout. This is a book that tells the “rest of the story” in light of sound biblical teaching. I found it difficult to put down when reading it.

Leslie E. Buege
R.A.S. Board Member

BOOK REVIEW

The Celestine Prophecy

By James Redfield

Reviewed by Berit Kjos

When a self-published, self-distributed book is picked up by the powerful publishing arm of the Time-Warner company and soars to the top of the New York Times bestseller list, you know it has a message the world wants to hear.

Has humanity entered a new stage in its spiritual evolution? Is it time to revive ancient mysticism, grow in consciousness through communion with nature, connect with universal energies, and empower one another through love? Could the ancient Mayans have risen to such vibrational heights that they were actually *raptured* into an invisible spiritual state, leaving only a few mysterious clues to their superior wisdom?

Yes, answers James Redfield's top-selling thriller, The Celestine Prophecy. Its huge enthusiastic readership proves the appeal of its New Age message. After all, why shouldn't humans take charge of their own evolution? Why not seek telepathic connections with plants and people? Why not believe that today's anger, self-centeredness and "profound sense of restlessness" are merely symptoms of a universal awakening to higher spiritual realities. As Redfield shrewdly argues, the church people who resist this spiritual transformation simply don't understand. Afraid of losing authority, they refuse to accept today's psychic discoveries as tools that would clarify biblical truth and broaden spiritual experiences.

By disguising occult concepts in Christian terminology, New Age books have lured masses of so-called Christians into New Age

and Neopagan circles. Just look at America's fascination with Betty Eadie's deceptive visions in Embraced by the Light. Notice the soaring demand for counterfeit angels and feminist distortions of God. Since most contemporary "truth-seekers" have neither the *facts* nor the *will* to resist these seductive illusions, a *paradigm shift*—a massive change in America's view of reality—is transforming our culture. "Progressive" educators, writers, entertainers, and media leaders are fast replacing America's "narrow, obsolete" Biblical *world view* with a utopian New Age/Neopagan *paradigm*. In his introduction, Redfield summarizes his view of this process:

For half a century now, a new consciousness has been entering the human world, a new awareness that can only be called transcendent, spiritual... We know that life is really about a spiritual unfolding that is personal and enchanting—an unfolding that no science or philosophy or religion has yet fully clarified... [O]nce we understand...how to engage this allusive process and maximize its occurrence in our lives, human society will take a quantum leap into a whole new way of life....

All that any of us have to do is suspend our doubts and distractions just long

enough...and miraculously, this reality can be our own.

It sounds tempting. Simply suspend your doubts and flow with the tide. Trust Redfield, a child therapist raised a Methodist, as he outlines the path to global perfection through a set of ancient "Insights." Identify with his fictional characters in their pursuit of the sacred Mayan Manuscript. Follow their growth in consciousness as they *experience* each new Insight. After all, this teaching is validated by history (as interpreted by Redfield) and carefully researched by sincere scientists. But watch out for the conservative leaders of the religious and scientific establishments. They have initiated a murderous witch-hunt for the keepers of the Manuscript, the true saviors of the earth.

God's people need the unchanging, uncorrupted word of God.

The Manuscript's nine Insights are worth noting, since they illustrate today's steps to social transformation. They beckon young and old through classroom encounter groups, multicultural curricula, earth-centered movies, and New Age books. Blending psychology, pseudo-science, occult spirituality and utopian visions of the future, they teach fantasy instead of facts, and disguise their deceptions in subtle imitations of biblical truth:

1. Be open and alert to the spiritual forces guiding seekers from behind the scenes.
2. Re-imagine history. Realize that the old values no longer fit.
3. See the universe as a vast energy system responsive to human thoughts and expectations.

4. Realize that wrongful manipulation of this cosmic energy causes all human conflict.
5. Resolve conflicts by drawing energy from a higher source.
6. Discover your true selves through oneness with the universal energy.
7. Seek guidance in dreams, thoughts, coincidences....
8. Stay centered. Project energy to others for mutual empowerment.
9. Envision a spiritually evolved humanity living on a planet radiant with health and energy. Live and share the message.

The Ninth Insight predicts global transformation. In the next millennium, humans "will voluntarily decrease our population so that we all may live in the most powerful and beautiful places on the Earth... we will intentionally let the forest go uncut so that they can mature and build energy.... Our needs will be completely met without the exchange of any currency, yet also without any overindulgence or laziness.... Guided by their intuitions, everyone will know precisely what to do..."¹

"Once we reach the *critical mass*," continues Redfield, "the human race will...see trees and rivers and mountains as temples of great power. We'll demand an end to any economic activity that threatens this treasure...someone will intuit alternative [solutions] as they seek their own evolution."²

Strange as they sound, these illusions have taken root in mainstream America. They permeate today's global, multicultural and environmental curricula. World-class education—the aim of international leaders as well as President Clinton and the NEA—call students to save the earth from wars and pollution by embracing a global spirituality, a seductive blend of the

world's earth-centered religions. Al Gore calls it a "panreligious perspective" based on "the wisdom distilled by all faiths."³

In his book, Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit, our vice-president points his readers toward a global spirituality that would restore "our feeling of connectedness to the rest of nature" and lead us into a better world. Quoting excommunicated Roman Catholic priest and scientist, Teilhard de Chardin, whose message of humanity's spiritual evolution echos Redfield's, Gore writes, "'The fate of mankind, as of religion, depends upon the emergence of a new faith in the future.' Armed with such a faith, we might find it possible to resanctify the earth, identify it as God's creation, and accept our responsibility to protect and defend it...."⁴

That pace-setters like Redfield and Gore promote pagan spirituality as the path to global harmony should come as no surprise. As always, when God's people neglect biblical truth, they drift back to earth-centered religions. Americans may hide their pagan beliefs behind Christian terminology and, like Redfield, voice sincere sentiments about love and unity, but they cannot fool our sovereign God. He has warned us that "other gods" and "deceiving spirits" lead to death and destruction, not peace and perfection.

As the masses trade truth for myths in a feverish search for power without accountability, God's people need the unchanging, uncorrupted word of God. As our nation rationalizes sin and idealizes paganism, Christians had better heed the warnings of Scripture and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As schools become mission stations for global spirituality, our children had better know the strategic truths of God's armor (Ephesians 6:10-18), which can equip them to discern and counter every deception of the enemy. Remember, our Lord has promised to "supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Those who accept his provisions for victory in today's intensifying battle for truth, can count on His promise in Romans 8:37: "**But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us!**"

¹ James Redfield, The Celestine Prophecies (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 222-223.

² Ibid., 224.

³ Al Gore, Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1992), 259.

⁴ Ibid., 263.

For *practical* information about the global and feminist spirituality in schools, books, movies and churches, read Under the Spell of Mother Earth and Your Child and the New Age by Berit Kjos, available from R.A.S. (800) 562-9153. To learn more about the armor of God—which offers oneness and intimacy with Jesus Christ as well as His vital protection—read A Wardrobe from the King, an eight-week Bible study on Ephesians 6:10-18. Available through Christian bookstores.

BOOK REVIEW

The World of Gurus By Vishal Mangalwadi

Reviewed by William A. BeVier

The author is a native Indian with a Master's Degree in Philosophy who lives and teaches in India. The subtitle of his book is: "A critical look at the philosophies of India's influential gurus and mystics."

Mangalwadi's Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (R.S.V., 1952 ed.). This will be offensive to some. His reference in the preface to a person finding truth in "sadguru Jesus Christ" is a term which should be recognized in the context of the book.

The author begins by giving a history of guruism in India and why it has found acceptance in North America and Western Europe since the 1960's. His thesis for acceptance is the failures of historic Protestant Christianity. Westerners had turned to rationalism and secular humanism, having rejected Biblical Christianity. Many then saw rationalism and humanism were not satisfying, so were receptive to something new and different. The philosophy/religion of the gurus provided this. Americans, especially, seem to have a propensity for the "new and different." Guruism was a return to mysticism in a new guise.

Mangalwadi at times uses terms common in Hinduism without giving the meanings for a Western reader. He does explain or define many of the Hindu terms in Western language. However, the book has no collected glossary.

The author demonstrates that each guru is unique and frequently contradicts other gurus (not apparent to the uninformed Westerner). There are many, many schools

of thought and groups within Hinduism/Buddhism.

Mangalwadi traces the history and background in India of some of the more common groups that have come into the U.S., e.g., Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, the Divine Light Mission. Several of these have had wider acceptance in this country than they ever had in India. The author also gives reasons why these foreign religions and lifestyles found an acceptance among certain people, especially the young.

One dated aspect of the book is that Mangalwadi writes as if Bhagawan Rajneesh is still living (the original book was published in 1987 and these references have not been updated). The author takes Rajneesh's life up to his extradition from the U.S. in 1985.

One chapter features the famous guru Sathya Sai Baba. Sai Baba was the guru under whom Tal Brooke, now of Spiritual Counterfeit Project, studied in India.

The author personally visited many of the gurus presented in the book, talked with their devotees, and studied their varying worldviews. He concluded all Hindu gurus oppose rational thinking; it conflicts with their essential monism. Monism also claims to be amoral, but Mangalwadi points out the gurus repeatedly make moral judgments. Mangalwadi personally does not believe truth is to be found by human reason (he has studied philosophy), that is why God has provided the human race with a revelation, the Bible. This is something all gurus reject (with the Bible, who needs a guru?).

Mangalwadi concludes his book by presenting Jesus Christ as the supreme "Sanatan [eternal] Sadguru." In this concluding chapter Mangalwadi shows the complete contrasts between Hinduism (and the gurus) and Biblical Christianity (and the Lord Jesus Christ). This chapter alone makes the book worthwhile.

The author has written for the Westerner who wants an understanding of guruism (and incidentally, what Hinduism in its various forms has done to India). He makes it difficult to comprehend why any Westerner who has benefited from our Judeo-Christian heritage would want to accept guruism and the New Age Movement (its adaptation to the West).

A careful student of the Scripture will find weaknesses in Mangalwadi's theology, e.g., he refers to "eternal hell" (in Scripture the Lake of Fire is eternal, hell being cast into it); he refers to "inspired men" writing Scripture. (only the "Scripture" is inspired, 2 Tim. 3:16-17). But in contrast, which of us, from the west, could write as well about Hinduism and not make mistakes?

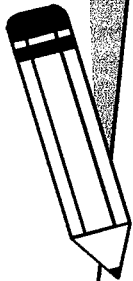
R.A.S. will stock a limited quantity of the book. We recommend it for all who would benefit from an excellent overview of guruism and its impact on India and the West.

The World of Gurus, Revised Edition, by Vishal Mangalwadi. Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1992. 199pp. \$11.95

NOTICES

A review of our computer system revealed a need to upgrade it. It is estimated we would need gifts totaling about \$2000 over and above current giving to be able to make such a purchase. Many of you know the importance of a computer to an office today. Please join us in praying for the provision of such gifts. If you can provide such gifts designated for that purpose, our prayers to the Lord would be answered!

For some time we have been advertising for the provision of an Office Manager. We operate what is essentially a one-person office. Our basic need is for a self-supporting person, from either retirement income or income raised by deputation or some combination, who is called to a ministry such as R.A.S. Complete knowledge about cults is not a requirement. This can be learned and our Board of Directors is local and available to be of help. Please pray about this need of R.A.S.



NOTES OF ENCOURAGEMENT

1 Thessalonians 4:11

We have received a number of notes of encouragement, and some of admonishment. We are including a few of these with our appreciation. The prayers and encouragement of our constituency is vital to this ministry.

I appreciated the visit with you this morning! Also, thanks again, so much, for the "special service." That is available in so few places anymore. Seems like several are beginning to "see the light." The errors need to be exposed.

Cheyenne, WY



Keep up the good work. It is needed now more than in the past. So many deceivers, and many are being misled. I do not understand the changes to conform to the way of evil and the world. My heart is grieved. God bless you and guide you as you teach about error.

Austin, TX



Thank you for taking the time to look for the two books we wanted. We greatly appreciate it. RAS has been very helpful to us. Keep up the good work.

Robbinsdale, MN



I don't want to lose out on a single issue of The Discerner, so I am sending in a year's renewal to begin whenever my former subscription runs out. We were very gratified with the three subject matter articles you focused on in this past issue. We were eager for the expose on those false teachings.

Sikeston, MO

Enclosed is a check to help with the expenses of this fine work. Dr. Dahlin will remember my father who helped when you were located at 8th and Hennepin. My husband, joined the heavenly throng just 6 weeks ago. May the Lord continue to bless the work.

West Concord, MN



The Discerner is a wonderful help-thanks for all your work! I was brought up a Catholic, also studied with the Jehovah's Witnesses for a short time, also Armstrongism, also Rosicrucianism. But now for thirty years I've been a born again child of God-love it!

Eugene, OR



God bless your faithful service. I have received so much help from the pieces I have ordered. I have had the pleasure of sharing the information with others. United we stand.

Cavalier, ND



As I was sitting in my pickup truck yesterday, after a short lunch before returning to work, I started reading my copy of The Discerner and immediately the Lord impressed me to share this pay period's tithe with RAS.

Yreka, CA



Can't regularly contribute to this very important ministry; have known where to turn when in need of information. Appreciate your being there, my thanks for this valuable service.

Pelican Rapids, MN