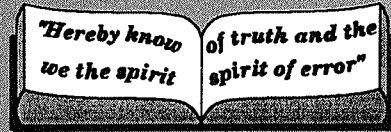


The Discerner



Volume 15, Number 4

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

In this issue of The Discerner we are featuring four articles which we believe relate to important current issues.

One issue facing Christians today is the fact that certain rather prominent individuals are deciding to leave Evangelical Christianity and affiliate with the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church. We believe most of these individuals really have no in-depth knowledge of church history or Biblical theology. It is our hope this first article will be informative about Eastern Orthodoxy. For R.A.S. this has not been an issue in the past, but we are receiving an increasing number of inquiries about this. We also are now building a file on the subject in order that we may be better able to respond.

With the influx of people from the Middle East and the increasing notoriety being received by the Black Muslim movement, there is a growing need for us to be aware of Islam, its beliefs and practices. Our Vice President has prepared an article on this subject, emphasizing the Nation of Islam.

Another concern for many people today is the growing affinity between some Evangelicals and some Roman Catholics. Because of agreement on such subjects as

abortion, homosexuality, and theological topics of the Trinity, inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Christ, many seem to overlook or be ignorant of basic issues which have divided Biblical Protestantism and Roman Catholicism for centuries. The intent of the article "Why The Protestant Reformation" is to remind us of some of the factors which produced the Protestant Reformation and why these factors still are relevant.

Our fourth article is a reprint of "Deceiving Spirits" by Donald L. Norbie which first appeared in his publication Milk & Honey (Oct. 1995). He kindly gave us permission to reprint it for our readers. We believe he too has touched upon several topics of current relevance.

The ministry of Religion Analysis Service continues because of the faithful contributions of many individuals and churches. We recently became aware of another way contributions can be made to R.A.S. AmeriVision Communications, Inc., also known by the trademark Lifeline, of Oklahoma City, is a Christian long distance telephone company which donates 10% of all receipts from their customers to ministries like R.A.S. If you are interested

in this service, their telephone number is 800-800-7550. Their address is:

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As we come to the end of another calendar year, we look back with thanksgiving to God for His blessings and to many who support and pray for R.A.S. May these continue until our Lord returns for His Church.

A RETURN TO EASTERN ORTHODOXY

By Jo Ann BeVier

A resurgence of people leaving mainline denominations and going into Eastern Orthodox churches (frequently referred to as the Greek Church) has been cause for concern. There was concern when noted people of Protestant faith left their churches some years ago and went to Orthodox churches. But there have been a larger than usual number of people "switching" their allegiance. So perhaps there is a definite difference between the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant beliefs.

When the apostles took the Gospel far and near because persecution and paganism drove them throughout the known world at that time, their followers shaped Christianity and died martyr's deaths for it. Heretics splintered it and councils tried to bind the wounds and finally the patriarchs stood with emperors to rule the church-state called the Byzantine Empire¹.

In A.D. 330 Constantine, the emperor and ruler of the church-state, moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium and began to rule his vast empire from the new Constantinople, and the most important split in Christianity was underway. Up to that time the church in the West and the church in the East formed one body. In the

East there were four patriarchs, each traditionally equal with the fifth, the patriarch or bishop of Rome.

All five patriarchs accepted the Nicene Creed; all were sacramental and apostolic in policy. There were, however, certain basic differences that were confusing. Racially, socially, linguistically, mentally, morally and philosophically, there were deep gulfs between the two. The East was Greek in blood and speech; the West was Latin. The transferring of the capital from West to East meant a shift in influence and when invaders came against Rome, they turned to the Franks for aid. The pope crowned Charles the Great, a Frank, in A.D. 800 as emperor, and the Roman Church became identified with the Holy Roman Empire in the West.

There was deep conflict between the pope at Rome and the patriarch of Constantinople, both political and ecclesiastical. The Eastern church held that the Holy Spirit proceeded directly from the Father; the Western church adopted the view that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son—filioque. The Latin church added the word "filioque" to the Nicene Creed.

In 1054, the pope and the patriarch mutually excommunicated each other and two churches resulted, Western and Eastern. The pope was head of the Western church, and in the East, there were four patriarchs, or heads of Eastern Orthodoxy. This is important in understanding the Eastern Orthodox Church; it is not a monarchy with one all-powerful ruler at the top, but an "oligarchy of patriarchs" based on the body of bishops, and is responsible to local or general church councils. No one patriarch is responsible to any other patriarch, yet all are within the jurisdiction of an ecumenical council of all the churches in communion with the patriarch of Constantinople, known as the Ecumenical Patriarch (Constantinople is now Istanbul).

Today Christendom is divided into three principle sections: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox (often referred to as the Greek Church) and Protestant.

The Eastern Orthodox Church consists of churches which accept the decrees and decisions of the first seven general church councils. Certain Eastern church bodies refused to accept the definition of Christology by one of the councils and are referred to as the Ancient Eastern Churches (Syrian-Anthiochian, Malabar Syrians, Armenians, Copts of Egypt, and Ethiopians).

The Eastern Orthodox Church tends to divide into independent national and social groups: Syrian, Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Albanian, Greek and Georgian. There are, at present, four ancient Eastern Orthodox patriarchates (Istanbul, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem), with the modern patriarchates of the Russians, Serbs, Romanians,

Bulgarians, and Georgians. In the U.S. today the Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Ukrainian, Carpatho-Russian, and Syrian churches are under bishops of their respective nationalities.

Doctrine in Eastern Orthodoxy is based on the Bible, tradition, and on the decrees of the seven ecumenical councils. The Nicene Creed is recited in all liturgies and various services, without the filioque clause. The dogma of the pope as sole "vicar of Christ on earth" is rejected; they honor Mary as "Theotokos" (Mother of God) but don't accept the immaculate conception; they honor the saints and nine orders of angels; they reject the teaching of indulgences and purgatory, but pray for the dead; they reverence saints and icons (consecrated pictures). They have seven sacraments: baptism (by threefold immersion of infants) anointing with oil (confirmation or chrismation) which is administered immediately after baptism, communion (they believe that the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ), penance, holy orders (ordination), marriage, and holy unction (ministered to sick but not always as a last rite). They believe faith and works are necessary for justification. Services are extremely liturgical and ornate, with rich robes, crowns and incense.

Their church government is episcopal with a council of bishops, lower clergy, and laymen.

There are three orders in the ministry: deacons (who administer the sacraments and assist in parish work), priests and bishops. Deacons and priests may marry before ordination but not after, bishops must not marry and are all of some

monastic rule and are under lifelong vows of poverty, chastity and obedience².

Orthodox churches have not changed in their theology or liturgy since the 8th century, following the theology of their primary theologian John of Damascus (ca. 700-754), changes being only in language and name. Some Orthodox churches have not accepted the modern calendar (introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582). However, in 1964 in Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI met and embraced Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. In a healing gesture both rescinded the excommunication that sundered the “one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church” nine centuries ago³. At the present time there are 3.5 million adherents in Eastern Orthodoxy in the United States and 225 million in the world.

In the Fall 1995 issue of Christian Research Journal there was a response to an earlier article they had printed titled “Westerners on the Eastern Orthodox Trail” (Summer 1995). In this response, an Orthodox church clergyman took issue with the Orthodoxy embraced by Frank Schaeffer and Peter Gilquist. They both have written books on their experiences in going from Protestant to Orthodox churches. He notes that: “Their interpretation is a ‘popular misunderstanding’ that Orthodoxy is nothing substantially different than a conservative version of Anglicanism.”⁴ Their’s is not a view borne out by history.

The article in the Summer issue of Christian Research Journal goes into this subject of Protestants converting to Orthodoxy. In this same issue of Christian Research Journal there is a book review of Frank Schaeffer’s book, Dancing Alone:

The Quest for Orthodox Faith in the Age of False Religions. Schaeffer, who is the son of the late evangelical Presbyterian scholar and founder of L’Abri, Francis Schaeffer, is highly critical of his former evangelical environment and of the Roman Catholic Church.

There are other books on the subject, two of which are: Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective by Daniel B. Clendenin, and Ecumenicity, Evangelicals and Rome by John Warwick Montgomery.

As can be seen by reading this presentation, the Eastern Orthodox church has survived much persecution and conflict through a distinct difference in beliefs and doctrines. Certainly as Bible believing Protestants we should know the background of any group we choose to commit ourselves to, and should know to stand on the truth of the Word of God.

End Notes

- 1 David F. Robinson, “Where the Fathers Preached and Martyrs Bled,” Great Religions of the World, (National Geographic, 1978), pp. 306-321.
- 2 Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations in the United States, (Abington Press, 1980), pp. 108-111.
- 3 “The Orthodox Church: Bastion of the East,” Great Religions of the World (National Geographic, 1978), p. 322.
- 4 “Response,” (Christian Research Journal, Fall 1995), p. 5.

THE MILLION MAN MARCH AND THE NATION OF ISLAM

By *Ervin D. Ingebretson*

On an October day, which will in all likelihood be recorded in history, a massive number (maximum estimate at about 800,000) of black men from across the nation journeyed to Washington, D.C. to join in the Million Man March. The call to assemble in this historic fashion had multiple objectives. Black men were challenged to join in effecting reconciliation and atonement (whatever this meant), take personal responsibilities for families and communities, pledge to reduce crime and drug traffic in neighborhoods, etc. These stated objectives, if implemented, are highly commendable.

The creditable goals notwithstanding, an unpublished objective loomed largely in this call mustering Black men. It centered about the man who was responsible for the March concept and the agenda for the day—Louis Farrakhan.

Unlike the Martin Luther King, Jr. rallies of the 50's and 60's where there was a Christian presence, this March obviously had the fingerprints of the Nation of Islam on it. The followers of Islam, particularly the Nation of Islam, are especially hostile to Christian believers. In this event it is impossible to separate the message from the messenger.

While it was not expressly a staged rally for the Nation of Islam, literature urging people to join the ranks of the religious and ethnic body was readily available. Also, the charismatic personality and leadership of Farrakhan would no doubt attract men whose religious orientation was weak or

non-existent. C. Eric Lincoln in The Black Muslims in America states that the Nation of Islam makes a strong appeal to young Black men. He also comments that fraternal responsibility is a strong attraction for many Blacks due to social and civic insecurity¹. Leaders who addressed the participants of the March often led them in the chant "We are black, we are black." Raised clenched fists, a symbol of Black Power, could be seen across the sea of people when ignited by a podium speaker.

The Nation of Islam began historically in 1851 as Eric Blyden, a brilliant scholar born in the West Indies, became convinced that slaves bought and sold in America were Muslims but were forced to convert to Christianity. It was common for blacks to repudiate Christianity because they saw a strong link between the Church and white supremacy.

In the 1930s W. D. Fard held home meetings in which he told people their natural religion was Islam. He named his movement The Nation of Islam. Elijah Poole, a convert to Islam, changed his name to Elijah Muhammad. He requires members to give up their last names since they were slave names and to replace them with the letter "X."

The "X" symbolized their unknown African name, e.g., Malcolm X, who was assassinated when he moved more closely to the traditional Islamic faith².

After serving as Minister of Mosques in Boston, New York, and Chicago, Farrakhan

became the leader of the Nation of Islam edging out Wallace Muhammad, the son of Elijah Muhammad. And now it appears that the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the long-time self-appointed spokesperson for all Blacks, is diminutively standing in the shadow of Farrakhan.

The March objectives were fraught with not so subtle political and racist overtones. The Rev. Jesse Jackson declared that a Black vote would send Speaker Gingrich and Senator Dole "packing."

Reporters milled about the March participants on the Mall sampling responses to the more than 60 speakers throughout a program that lasted at least eight hours. In a Washington Post survey of 1,047 participants, half were there to "send a message to white people," six in ten had an unfavorable impression of whites and four in ten had a bad impression of Jews. Farrakhan has on numerous occasions incited the Jews with venomous criticism of their ethnicity. A Farrakhan supporter stated, "I'm not saying we hate Jews, but any other race besides the Black Muslims we will not believe."³

The religion of the Nation of Islam is highly charged with racism. Elijah Muhammad taught that whites could not become Muslims because they are devils by nature. Their goal is "every black man in America be united with his own." Thus every Black Christian is a target of the movement. The Islamic vision is a United Front of Black Men standing shoulder to shoulder ready to do battle against the enemy—the enemy being the white Christian. They demand absolute separation of the black and white races. Blacks who seek integration with whites are unrealistic and stupid⁴.

Louis Farrakhan, as principle podium speaker, for more than two hours railed against the supremacy of whites whom he claimed enslaved blacks for more than 400 years. With illogical, senseless application of a system of numerology he attempted to make the case of this enslavement.

One of the demands previously made in the Nation of Islam Manifesto to right the wrongs of white supremacy over blacks is the designation of a portion of America where adherents of their religion would live and be totally supported by the U.S. for a period of at least 25 years.

Louis Farrakhan used this momentous occasion to showcase himself as the leader of the Nation of Islam and the self-appointed leader of all Blacks. In this exposure the Nation of Islam stands to gain significant numbers swelling the Muslim population in America to well over six million.

This racial controversy which threatens to severely divide our nation calls for intense prayer that each Black man would return to assume leadership responsibilities for improving family and community life. Evidence of this in some areas has already been demonstrated. The Church faces a serious and momentous challenge in presenting the claims of the Gospel. That there is no color bias in Christ is a fundamental Biblical truth. People who come to the Cross for salvation are not seen by the color of their skin but as those for whom Christ died.

Any effective ministry must be done on a person-to-person basis. Having first bathed in prayer the desire to share faith in Christ with a person in the Nation of Isla

religion one must spend time patiently cultivating friendship thus earning the right to communicate the Gospel.

How often ministry to Muslims is considered to be the calling of a few to go to some distant land where they live. More realistically this ministry could be to a neighbor next door.

Notes

¹ C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America.

² Ibid.

³ Weekly Standard Magazine, October 30, 1995, "The March: What Was Said."

⁴ C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America.

Other Sources

C. George Fry, Islam Christianity's Greatest Challenge.

Worldwide Challenge, Campus Crusade, "Unveiling Islam."

WHY THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

By William A. BeVier

Ignorance has never been a virtue among Christians, but it has always been evident at times. Today is no exception.

There are many individuals who identify themselves as Evangelical Christians, but do not clearly see themselves as "Protestants." They are not "protesting" against anything and do not seem to know why there was a "Protestant Reformation."

There are several factors that contribute to this viewpoint. One is the lack of clear teaching of the doctrines (beliefs) of the New Testament in many Evangelical churches. Too, the Ecumenical Movement with its accompanying liberalism and tolerance has affected many Evangelicals, at least indirectly. The Vatican II Council influenced many people to believe that the Roman Catholic Church has made basic changes in its dogmas (what must be believed) and its doctrines (what should be

believed). This in reality is not true. No dogma and few doctrines were changed by Vatican II. Neither does the new Roman Catholic Catechism make basic changes in traditional Roman Catholic beliefs. Also, there is a widely accepted view in Western Society today that everything is relative, there are no absolutes. The Protestant Reformation was based on the position that the Bible, as the written Word of God, reveals authoritative absolutes.

The centuries leading up to the Protestant Reformation in Western Europe has long been termed the "Dark Ages" by professional historians (the details or reasons are beyond the scope of this article). But a revival of learning took place in Western Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries (again, for a variety of reasons) known as the Renaissance. Accompanying this revival was a renewed interest in the Bible, especially among Roman Catholic

clergy, this led in time to the Reformation, basically an attempt to take the Church back to Biblical Christianity.

The purpose of this article is not to go into details of the Protestant Reformation, but to remind us of some of the men who produced the Protestant Reformation and why they did so.

John Wycliffe (ca. 1328-1384)

John Wycliffe has been termed “the Morning Star of the Reformation.” He advocated some of the same ideas of Scripture as later did Martin Luther and John Calvin, though he died almost one hundred years before Luther was born.

Wycliffe, a Roman Catholic priest, was educated and served on the faculty of Oxford University in England most of his life.

His first attempts at reform were to eliminate immoral clergymen (his associates) and to strip the Roman Catholic Church of its vast property holdings, which Wycliffe believed was a cause of much ecclesiastical evil. Wycliffe was supported and protected in his views by certain English noblemen who were willing to take control of Church property.

But beginning in 1378 Wycliffe, largely through his continuing study of the Bible, started publicly opposing some of the basic dogmas of the Roman Catholic Church. He attacked the authority of the Pope, asserting that Christ is the only head of the Church (during much of Wycliffe’s life there was at times two groups of men claiming to be popes, one in Avignon in France and one in Rome). Wycliffe also asserted the Bible

and not the Roman Church was the only authority for Christians.

In 1382 Wycliffe completed his translation of the New Testament into English, believing the Bible should be in the people’s own language. In 1384 a friend of Wycliffe’s completed the Old Testament. Also in 1382 Wycliffe publicly rejected the dogma of transubstantiation, i.e., in the Mass the elements become the literal body and blood of Christ (this still is Roman Catholic dogma). One consequence of Wycliffe’s view was that salvation was no longer in the hands of the priests as they dispensed the elements.

Wycliffe’s view on transubstantiation was condemned by a local church council in London in 1382, and he was forced to leave Oxford and move to a parish in Lutterworth, England. But by then his ideas were being spread by his former students at Oxford and by lay preachers called Lollards. In 1401 it became punishable by death to preach Wycliffe’s ideas in England.

Wycliffe died in 1384, so it was too late to punish him directly. However, the Roman Church claims it can reach beyond the grave. The Council of Constance (1414-1418) condemned Wycliffe, ordered his bones exhumed from their grave in the Lutterworth church yard, and “cast a distance from the sepulcher of the church” (Schaff, History of the Christian Church, 6:325). His bones were burned and cast into a nearby river.

John Huss (ca. 1369-1415)

Because of a royal marriage between King Richard II of England and Anne of Bohemia,

Bohemian students went to Oxford to study. There many accepted the ideas of Wycliffe and went back to propagate them in Bohemia. One who accepted Wycliffe's ideas from these students was John Huss. Huss became rector of the University of Prague in 1402. His preaching of Wycliffe's views contributed to a rise of nationalism among the Bohemians who chafed under the Holy Roman Empire and its close associate, the Roman Catholic Church.

Huss came under criticism of the Roman Church hierarchy and was summoned to appear before a church council in Constance, Switzerland. (The main purpose of the council was to end the existing papal schism of three men claiming to be pope, and get back to one pope located in Rome.) In spite of a written document of safe conduct to and from the council by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, after seven months of incarceration and suffering, Huss was condemned as a heretic and publicly burned at the stake (Sigismund was told by the hierarchy it was all right to lie to a heretic).

Huss had proclaimed reform of the Roman Church along the lines of Wycliffe (which was essentially an internal reform—not a “revolution”), an appeal to the Bible, and a rejection of papal absolutism.

Huss was martyred, but his ideas lived on. His ideas were later found in the Bohemian Brethren (United Brethren) and the Moravian Church. A fact of history is that it was Moravians later living in England who were instrumental in the personal conversion of John Wesley. Huss' ideas also influenced Martin Luther.

[Between 1409 and 1449 several church councils were convened in Western Europe which attempted to reform the Roman Church from within. All failed in this objective, though they eventually healed the papal schism and got rid of some heretics, e.g., John Huss. The failure to reform itself, made the Protestant Reformation inevitable as Western Europeans had increasing access to the Bible. After the printing press was invented, the first complete book printed in moveable type in 1454 was the Bible.]

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

After considerable formal schooling and a frightening experience in a thunderstorm, Luther entered an Augustinian monastery in 1505.

Because of concerns for his own soul, through a monk and a priest, Luther was encouraged by Staupitz, the vicar-general of the Augustinian Order, to study the Bible. This Luther did with zeal.

In 1510-11 he was sent to Rome by his monastic order, and there he saw for himself the corruption and luxury of the Roman Church, things he would never have seen in his native Germany (Saxony). After this he was assigned as a professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, and there he began to lecture his students using the Bible as his text. It was here, around 1513-17, he understood and accepted that justification of a sinner by God comes through faith, and by implication, not from the clergy through the sacraments or by one's own efforts. The Bible became the only authority he trusted, after a study of the original languages.

When Tetzel the indulgence seller came into the area near Wittenberg, Luther boldly opposed him (with the support of the secular ruler, the Elector of Saxony, but in defiance of the Pope). Originally Luther only called for a reform of the indulgence system. But by 1521 both he and Pope Leo X realized a complete break between Luther with his ideas and the Roman Church would take place. Luther was given opportunity to recant, but he refused and was excommunicated. Luther declared if he could be proven wrong by the Bible, he would recant. This did not happen.

In the meantime, Luther's ideas were being spread and receiving wide acceptance in Germany. In a series of writings Luther attacked the hierarchy (cf. the papacy), the sacramental system (rejecting that salvation must come through the sacraments), and the theology of Romanism (a plea for the priesthood of all believers). Luther soon translated the Bible into German, and it was widely read by the German people.

It was in 1529, following the second Diet at Speier, that a group of Lutheran nobles wrote a Protestation to the decisions of the Diet led by Roman Catholics and the word "Protestant" came into use.

Luther, with the help of Philip Melanchthon and others, gradually developed what is known historically as Lutheranism (though many Lutherans today appear to have no firsthand knowledge of Luther or his theology).

John Calvin (1509-1564)

John Calvin, a Frenchman by birth, was a second-generation reformer. His name and

theology is frequently denoted by the terms "Calvinism," "Reformed Faith," and "Presbyterianism." My experience has been that most people who are critical of Calvin have never personally read his writings and know very little of the man of his life.

Calvin was personally converted about 1533 and adopted the ideas of the Reformation. He then gave up his Roman Catholic benefices (income from three parishes, though he was never ordained as a priest—his father, secretary to a bishop obtained these for Calvin, the first when he was age six.)

With the help of William Farel, Calvin brought his understanding of the Reformation to Geneva, Switzerland and spread from there. He emphasized, at the risk of being overly brief, the sovereignty of God, the total spiritual depravity of the human race, the complete authority of the Bible, and salvation completely as a work of God. Calvin's extant writings total 50 volumes in one printing.

Both Calvin and Luther encouraged education, and the later Calvinist Puritans established many of the oldest colleges and universities in North America.

One of the countries into which the Calvinistic Reformation spread was Calvin's homeland of France. Calvinists eventually became so numerous (up to 20% of the population) that the French king, Roman Catholic, declared war on them. This involved the massacre of many civilians, e.g., "St. Bartholome Massacre" (August 1572).

Others

Time and space forbids presenting such men as: Savonarola (1452-1498, a monk hanged by order of the Roman Catholic Church in Florence, Italy); Philip Melancthon (1497-1560, the theologian of Lutheranism and Luther's successor); Huldreich Zwingli (1484-1531, a Roman Catholic priest who kept a concubine and purchased his first parish from his uncle, a bishop, before his personal conversion and renunciation of Romanism, killed in battle against a Roman Catholic army); Theodore Beza (1519-1605, Calvin's successor in Switzerland); John Knox (1513-1572, who studied under Calvin in Geneva and established the Reformation in Scotland in 1567). These and many others brought about the Protestant Reformation and its great benefits to Western Europe and North America, as well as to a lesser extent,

elsewhere in the world. These were benefits the Roman Catholic Counterreformation (1545ff) led by the popes and the Jesuits could not destroy.

Today many of these benefits are in jeopardy because of the reasons stated in the opening paragraphs of this article.

Earle E. Cairns summarized the Reformation with the words:

The authority of the Roman Church was replaced by the authority of the Bible, which the individual was to be allowed to read freely. The individual believer could now be his own priest and conduct his own religious life in fellowship with God after he had accepted His Son as his Savior by faith alone. (Christianity Through the Centuries, rev. ed., p. 300).

DECEIVING SPIRITS

By Donald L. Norbie

“**N**ow the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons....” (1 Timothy 4:1).

The Lord Jesus Himself warned of deception in the last days (Matthew 24:4,5,11,24) and these warnings were repeated by His prophets. Paul spoke of some as “false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13). Later in 1 Timothy, towards the end of his life, Paul vigorously warned against deception.

Peter joined in the same warning: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies...” (2 Peter 2:1).

This is not an attack from the outside but from within the church. Paul states that some will depart from the faith; they have been previously identified with God's people. One can think of Joseph Smith and his visions leading to the writing of the Book of Mormon and the Mormon Church. Read their doctrines and you will be convinced their source is “seducing

spirits," demonic activity, not the Holy Spirit. This is true of other cults as well.

Among those who remain in more orthodox churches there is a tremendous fascination with spirit manifestations. Beginning with the tongues movement at Azusa Street in Los Angeles around 1900 there has been an unhealthy occupation with "tongues, signs and wonders" and spiritual manifestations. Under the spiritual guise of desiring to duplicate the apostolic age with its miracles, many have become confused and deceived.

With all the talk and testimonies of the last one hundred years there have been no miracles that parallel the first century. The tongues movement has been scientifically analyzed and foreign languages are not being spoken today by persons who have never learned them, as was true on the day of Pentecost. "Tongues" today are made up of nonsense syllables strung together. No healer today can heal all who come to be healed as did the apostles (Acts 19:11, 12).

Christians need to be realistic. The signs of an apostle (2 Corinthians 12:12) are not being seen today but the apostolic gospel is still powerful. Sinners are being redeemed and changed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians need to quit seeking signs and seek sinners.

God the Father endorsed the gospel message initially with "signs and wonders" (Hebrews 2:4), according to His will. We should not require Him to do this repeatedly in every age. It is unbelief that is not satisfied with the witness of Scripture (Luke 16:31).

The desire for spirit manifestations and supernatural signs opens one to demon deception. While one may not lose his salvation he may be sidetracked and confused for years. All error is costly to the individual and to the Church.

John Wimber is the founder of the Vineyard churches and has been an ardent advocate of "signs and wonders." At a large rally in Michigan some years ago he was urging people to get "slain in the Spirit." About fifteen ministers and priests went forward to the platform to receive this blessing. When he laid his hands on them they fell over, shouting, their limbs jerking. One preacher began to run around on all fours barking like a dog. This event was hailed as a great work of God.

In a recent Scriptural [sic.] Counterfeit Project Newsletter (Fall 1994) there was an interesting report on the "holy laughter" sweeping many congregations today. It was stated that pastors of huge charismatic churches were stumbling around the church stage "drunk with holy laughter." Wanting to testify to the fact that "holy laughter" had transformed their ministries and their lives, many of them were unable to speak when called on to do so. Their halting speech was seen as "proof" of the "power of the spirit" that had come over them. "The congregation roared in approval as pastor after pastor laughed uncontrollably and then fell to the floor.

Rodney Howard-Browne has been a preacher with a Vineyard church in Toronto. He received an "anointing" in 1979 in South Africa, began to laugh uncontrollably and spoke in "tongues." Later he began sharing his "gift of holy laughter" with others. Now people come

Toronto from all over the world to experience this "gift." They then go back to their congregations and touch people, who then get "soaked in the Holy Spirit" and begin to laugh uncontrollably.

This experience has now spread around the world in charismatic congregations. Richard Roberts, president of Oral Roberts University, has had the experience and says it has changed his life and ministry. Pat Robertson of the 700 Club is enthusiastic about it and states, "It is wonderful. I applaud it."

Is this of God or is it another deception from "deceiving spirits"? First...there is no Biblical example for this experience. The coming of the Spirit was never accompanied by "holy laughter." Laughter is only mentioned six times in the New Testament and never connected with the coming of the Spirit.

The idea that the Holy Spirit can be passed on simply by the touch of one who has experienced "holy laughter" is contrary to Scripture. This touch was what Simon desired and was denied (Acts 8:19). Today all who have Christ have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). This Holy Spirit "He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior" (Titus 3:6). All have been baptized in the Holy Spirit into one body, the Church, and have drunk from that Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Now believers are urged to allow the Spirit to fill them and use them (Ephesians 5:18).

The confusion of these meetings goes against Scripture. "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). The practice of a number of people speaking at once, of all praying aloud at the

same time or speaking in tongues is contrary to order and creates confusion. Speaking is to be done so that all can hear, understand and be edified (1 Corinthians 14:26-33). "God is not the author of confusion."

The Spirit who gave the Scriptures will never encourage flagrant violation of God's Word. Emotionalism is no substitute for obedience. A lack of self-control is a quenching of the Spirit's work in one's life (Galatians 5:23). Such uncontrolled emotionalism is not the fruit of the Spirit but the working of the father of lies (John 8:44). "Be not deceived, my brethren."

The result of such meetings is emotional, with no spiritual edification. The emphasis on rock music and on repetitive, meaningless songs in many of these congregations is designed to have a hypnotic effect, to get one emotionally "high." Christians are being given a stone instead of bread (Matthew 7:9). The teaching of the Word occupied first place in the program of the apostolic church (Acts 2:42). It is time for Christians to realize that filling with the Spirit will accompany filling with the Word (Ephesians 5:17-21; Colossians 3:16-17). This will result in a holy people who love their God. Jesus said, "sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2).

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NOTES OF NEWS

GLAD NEWS

In 1996 Religion Analysis Service will celebrate its 50th anniversary! This will come as surprising news to some folks not so familiar with the history of R.A.S. We will be writing of the history of R.A.S. in the next issue of The Discerner. We look forward to this milestone year and what the Lord will do in it.

BOOK NEWS

The books listed below are a few books (and booklets) we have that are not in the catalog and we will not be carrying them but we do have some on hand and they are for sale:

Viewing the Vineyard by Lorri MacGregor \$.75

Bible Versions by Gail Riplinger \$15.00

Going On With God by Homer Duncan \$1.00

To Hell And Back by Maurice Rawlings \$12.95

There are a limited number of these books.

We will be printing a list of new books not listed in our catalog, those that are out of print, and those we are not currently stocking, in our bi-annual letter. The letter goes to all who received our catalog.

SAD NEWS

We have received word that Dr. Charles Feinberg, one of our original Advisory Board members, went to be with the Lord. Dr. Feinberg was well known for his scholarship, his books and his years of teaching the Word of God in seminaries, Bible conferences and churches. He was a true servant of the Lord.

SUBSCRIPTION NEWS

CHECK YOUR ADDRESS LABEL! If it reads "XV 4", your subscription expires with *this* issue. Please don't let your subscription expire. Renewals cost \$4.00 per year in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions cost extra to cover the additional postage.

PRAYER NEWS

Our R.A.S. President, Dr. William BeVier, has had major surgery November 20th. Pray for his recovery. Also, another Board member, Rev. Herbert Caneday, has had corrective artery surgery and is to have further surgery in the near future.