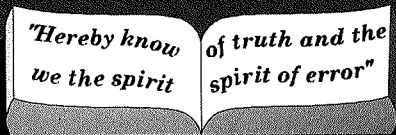


The Discerner



Volume 18, Number 1

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AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

Editorial	2
<i>William A. BeVier</i>	
In Memory of Herbert V. Caneday	3
Escape From the Truth	4
<i>Rev. H. V. Caneday</i>	
Why I Am Not a Bible Student (Part Three).....	9
<i>Robert C. Hill, Th.B.</i>	
DIS · CERN' · MENT	16
<i>Jo Ann BeVier</i>	
Book Reviews	19

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

Religion Analysis Service has lost two long-time close friends recently. Within two weeks of each other, the Lord saw fit to call to Himself Mrs. John E. Dahlin and Rev. Herbert V. Caneday. Mrs. Dahlin was the widow of Dr. John E. Dahlin, who for many years was the president of R.A.S. and editor of this publication. Rev. Caneday was our "senior" Board member in terms of service to R.A.S. He was 84 years of age, but still active teaching a Sunday School class until two weeks before his homegoing. We are reprinting one of his articles which appeared in the July-September 1982 Discerner, with an introductory tribute by John E. Dahlin. One might imagine that John Dahlin's first words to Herb Caneday, his long-time friend, on January 30 were: "What took you so long to get here?"

We extend our sympathy to the Mrs. Dahlin family and to Phyllis Caneday and Rev. Caneday's children. We are thankful at times like these for 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

This issue of The Discerner also contains the last of three articles by

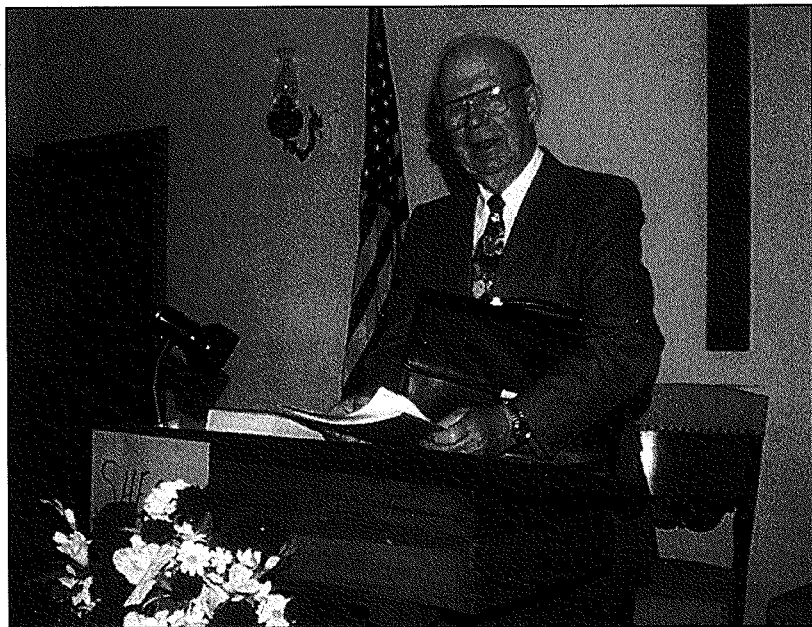
Robert C. Hill presenting the Bible Students movement, a break off from the Jehovah's Witnesses, but still maintaining many of Charles Taze Russell's original false teachings. As a reader, you may want to review the previous two articles in the last two issues to pick up the continuity.

Jo Ann BeVier has written an article reminding us of our continuing need for discernment, in view of recent developments in the spiritual world. As you read the article, you may be reminded of the issues facing us today and be able to relate them to Scripture.

In this issue we also present book reviews of several recent publications which have come to us. The field of publications continually changes. That is also the reason why we have to make an update already of our 1997-99 Catalog. Please review and keep this update for possible future reference.

In closing, we welcome back to Christian periodicals The Biblical Evangelist, once more being published by Dr. Robert L. Sumner.

IN MEMORY OF
HERBERT V. CANEDAY



In our series of "Fifty Years of History" in 1996, we presented a picture of Reverend Herbert Caneday and the founder of Religion Analysis Service, Reverend E. B. Jones. They were the "original" men who initiated the ministry of Religion Analysis Service in 1946. Reverend Caneday was the first Secretary of the Board of Directors. Except for a brief period of time, he served faithfully on the Board of Directors until his homegoing on January 30, 1998. His cheerful disposition and wise counsel were a constant source of stability for the organization.

Reverend "Herb" Caneday was preceded in death by his first wife,

Della. He is survived by his wife Phyllis, five children (four sons and one daughter), and seven grandchildren.

He was born in Taylors Falls, Minnesota, in 1913 and after many years of living in other places, he had again returned there and made his home in Taylors Falls at the time of his death.

His life had been one of fruitful ministry in serving as pastor in a number of churches and touching many lives by his faithful presentation of God's Word.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Psalm 116:15.

ESCAPE FROM THE TRUTH

By Rev. H. V. Caneday

(The Discerner, July-September 1982)

Herbert V. Caneday, whose excellent article is herewith presented to the readers, provides an important contribution on the subject: "Escape From the Truth." This article first appeared in a leading publication as prize-winning exposition. It is partly condensed by him for The Discerner. The writer is a thinker and a fine expositor of the Word. I am certain that his illuminating article will be appreciated. Rev. Caneday is the only member of the Board of Religion Analysis Service who has served continually since its inception in 1946. His ministry largely has been in eastern Minnesota and western Wisconsin. The article may become available later as a pamphlet.

John E. Dahlin, Editor

Consideration of the factors that draw people into the false cults will show that they fall into four major groups. Some unfortunate persons have been born into cultic families. Some are duped into embracing error. Others may have chosen to turn from revealed truth to accept falsehood. A fourth group is comprised of those who rejecting the truth in favor of the lie, have willfully conceived, given birth to, and organized systems of religious falsehood and then propagated their heresies to others. Excluding the first group, there is a common bond

between the latter three that finds its full expression in the fourth class.

On peripheral teachings there is a wide variation of thought across the cultic spectrum; but there is one lowest common denominator on which they all agree, namely: the denial of a literal hell of conscious, eternal, bodily torment of the wicked. This unpleasant thought and all Biblical doctrine supportive of it must be denied or reinterpreted by them so as to eviscerate it of any credulity.

Like alcoholics or drug addicts, these seek escape from the stern realities of Divine truth by repeated infusions of the lie. The French infidel, Mirabeau, when dying is said to have begged his nurse, "Give me more laudanum (tincture of opium) that I may not think of eternity." For those who "... received not the love of the truth...." Satan has developed a vast assortment of spiritual opiates to deaden the souls of willful unbelievers to the Bible's clear warnings of eternal judgment. If his current stock of cult-lies is unattractive to some persons, he is quick to create new ones, "tailor-made" to suit discriminating tastes.

I. The Wish is Father to the Thought

This no-hell wish is the hardcore around which a vast range of false doctrines have been developed

by the various cults for the purpose of making that wish an easy thought to believe. It then becomes an escape mechanism for those whose pleasure in unrighteousness makes God's Word an offensive Book to them.

One such person was Charles Taze Russell whose exposure to the Gospel did not draw him to the truth. After turning briefly to oriental religions, he came back to the Bible, professing to have found that it teaches that hell is the grave—not a place of torment. With that wishful thought as his basic premise, he went on to build the supportive superstructure of his heretical theology. Beginning with a no-hell wish, it became an escape mechanism for the millions who now call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. This pattern is repeated with variations in the origin and growth of all false cults.

The writer remembers going with a pastor to call on a member of his church, who was close to embracing the error of Universal Reconciliationism. When the fundamental doctrines pertinent to salvation were rehearsed to her, she declared, "I do believe each of them." She was then told that this system denies every one of those salvation truths. We were shocked to hear her say, "But I've always wanted to believe that God had some other way to save the lost." Her wish had almost led her to embrace the lie. Her wish became father to the thought because she knew her husband died in his sin, and her son was far from God. Her love and concern for them nearly overcame her love

of making that wish an easy thought to believe. Sadly, she did not turn back at that point, but proceed in unbelief.

II. The Thought Leads to the Delusion

Tracing the steps of a person offended by the Word, we can see how his wish to escape from the truth leads him to accept the lie. As he explores the perimeter of a heretical teaching, he tries to compare it with what he once believed, and shortly discovers that he must "unlearn" the latter. Whereas he first wished, then thought, he now rapidly slides into the quagmires of delusion because this "new wine" of error is too heady and alluring to resist. Still holding to his no-hell wish, he flounders in a succession of pitfalls.

The first of those pitfalls is a denial of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible. Some cults make a bold frontal attack upon the Word of God. Others in a subtle manner add to the Bible the words and books of men by which they vitiate the Sacred Word. Still others take away from the Scriptures by attacks upon its authenticity or validity for our time, or by quoting abridged portions suited to their purpose without regard for contextual truth. Most subtle of all, and more deadly, is the use of special translations that supposedly validate the error being propagated. This clever method has a special appeal to studious, inquiring persons who would be uncomfortable without the facade of a "Bible" that seems to substantiate their views. Cases in point are: "The New World Translation" by the Jehovah's Witnesses; the "Concordant Version" of the

Reconciliationists; and the "Inspired Bible" of the Mormons.

By the above means the authority of the Bible is canceled, adulterated, or shifted to the hands of men so that the one in pursuit of his no-hell wish is liberated to proceed to the other denials which he must embrace to be consistent with his original desire to escape from the truth. More than being liberated to embrace error, he will now find "Biblical" support for his necessary rejection of truth.

Pitfall number two is the denial of the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, which all the false cult systems do without exception. This unanimous agreement is not accidental, but a necessary step in the pursuit of their no-hell wish. The logic of it is: that the death of God the Son is a price far too high to pay for the salvation of sinners from a hell that does not exist. Conversely, if Jesus Christ is Infinite Deity, then His death is eloquent testimony that He has purchased salvation from an infinite, eternal, real punishment. Logic demands these values be kept in balance. Those who accept the no-hell wish must deny Christ's deity; while conversely, belief in His Deity is wholly compatible with the fact of a literal hell.

Other pitfalls involve the cult adherents in weak, wrong, and inadequate views of man's sin and a corresponding adulteration of one's views of the holiness of God. This tactic elevates man above his depraved, sinful state, and lowers God from the high and lofty perfection of His holy nature. With the gap between God and man thus nar-

rowed, there is no necessity for an infinite, divine Savior. With a little effort man can save himself.

One more pitfall demands our specific attention. Again the agreement within the cults is not accidental, but of sheer necessity they must all deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The key word is "bodily." They know their professed belief in a "spiritual resurrection" is meaningless. They dare not believe in His physical resurrection because that is an admission that God can, and probably will, bring all men before Himself in judgment by the same route. Paul bore testimony to this fact saying, "He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Since Christ's resurrection guarantees the same for all, and the judging of all men, it must be denied as incompatible with the no-hell wish. If the Judge remains dead, it would eliminate the day of judgment.

III. The Delusion Becomes the Deception

Somewhere in the process of being infused with the lie, the cultist will pass beyond the point of no return. Up to that critical point he has tried to embrace the error; but now the error embraces him! He is "hooked," and a willing captive of the lie. He has experienced a spiritual inversion, that is, the Satanic counterfeit of Biblical conversion. Even the cultic defenders know this, as Marley Cole admits in his book, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, page 15: "...It

is as if the Witnesses had hit upon the formula that religion as we know it has everything in reverse. To get true worship straightened out (you could almost accuse them of reasoning), you adopt the opposite of what you hear in church."

When a sinner is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, he passes from darkness to light and from blindness to spiritual sight. In the cultic counterfeit, one departs from light to pass into darkness, and from intellectual sight into total spiritual blindness. Moreover, the damning subtlety of this inversion is that the deluded person now believes he sees for the first time. This is an insidious counterfeit of Biblical conversion. Since from the beginning, "They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:10b), the topsy-turvy world of the cultist has inverted truth to make it become the "believable" lie. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20).

The writer had a long counseling session with one who had passed this spiritual point of no return. The subject of discussion was the absolute deity of Christ. After consideration of a series of Scriptures, he was asked to state his conclusions, to which he replied, "It looks as though the Bible teaches it; but I don't believe it anyway." He was not just deluded, he was deceived, and had gone through this inversion process. To him truth was error, and error was truth.

Lest we leave the impression that such persons are beyond hope and unreachable even by our Savior,

listen to the experience of one known to the writer. This young woman went headlong into the Jehovah's Witnesses system to become one of their prize converts and a staunch worker, going from house to house spreading the lie. Over an extended time, the testimonies of relatives got through to her so she became miserably convicted. In that state she worked even harder to convince herself; but with increasing apprehension. Once she prayed that she should find peace even if it meant going back to her former Roman Catholicism. Still no rest! Then, one day in utter desperation she fell to her knees in her kitchen and cried to God that if necessary He should blot out of her mind all she had learned in her cult so that she might be able to embrace the truth and find peace and salvation. God heard her prayer. Her deep and desperate desire for truth, at all costs, was the human factor in her transformed life. Her apprehensions were gone. Peace filled her soul. The next morning she tried to recall what books had taught about certain Bible statements. Her mind was a blank. She couldn't remember. God had done for her what she had asked! Looking into the books again, she was revulsed at what she had once believed. Her books went at once into the furnace. The soul that will honestly, earnestly ask God to give him "the love for the truth that they can be saved" can be assured of God's merciful response.

Those who persist in the pursuit of that no-hell wish do not now find themselves deceived because of ignorance, nor because truth is not available. They flee from the truth! They prefer the lie because it satisfies

their need for a spiritual opiate so that they can both live in sin, and in spiritual euphoria until the day they discover that:

IV. The Deception Leads to Damnation

As Satan's slaves, "...taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2:26), these persons may be morally upright, respectable, kind, loving, even church members, and of the socially elite. But persistence in seeking to escape from the truth will bring them to the terrifying reality that the hell they feared and denied, is a place of conscious, eternal torment. There they "... shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixtures into the cup of His indignation ... and they have no rest day nor night..." (Rev. 14:10, 11). In tender tones of pleading love, the Savior calls, "As I live, said the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: Turn ye, Turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezek. 33:11). Of those who will neither heed nor hear God's warnings, He says, "...yea, they have chosen their own ways and their soul delighteth in their abominations, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer: when I spake, they did not hear" (Isa. 66:3, 4).

Created in the image of God to worship and fellowship with His Creator, man is by nature, incurably religious. The God-shaped vacuum within man's soul is meant to be occupied by the One who died to redeem sinners. When that Savior is denied admittance to one's life,

something or someone else will occupy the throne in one's soul. Either Jesus Christ, who is "Truth" must be Lord, or the lie will reign supreme, and ultimately Satan will be seen to be one's master. Life or death hangs in the balance of choice.

Many years ago a man advertised himself as "the human fly" in California papers. He boasted that on a given day and hour he would be at a given point in a certain city to prove his ability to scale the side of a certain building without the aid of equipment. The day and hour arrived, and he was there together with a throng of spectators. He began to climb on the slight protrusions of the building's masonry. Up and up he went, and was approaching the top when he was seen to hesitate, looking to the right, then left for his next hold. Then he saw it! It was just above him, and nearly at his finger tips. With a slight spring he grasped it; but fell to his death. A blanket was thrown over his crushed body; and the hand that had reached up lay exposed. In his finger's grasp was a spider's web that he had mistaken for firm masonry. He had staked his life upon a spider's web and lost!

He was no more a fool than the one who spurns the rock-ribbed truth of God's Holy Word to trust in the lies of men. God says, "...they hatch cockatrice eggs, and weave the spider's web...their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works" (Isa. 59:5, 6). "They received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:10).

WHY I AM NOT A BIBLE STUDENT (PART THREE)

By Robert C. Hill, Th.B.

Hell in the Afterlife (Con't.)

There is a lack of regard and a blurring for what must be considered as two referent points for the dead. First, sheol can be understood as the referent point to the departed regarding their worldly identity, that is, they live and they die in respect to those around them. Therefore, they are no more to those who are still living. This is what the grave depicts to the living, who without the Word of God must see their fellow humans go into the grave to return no more and to see their loved ones and friends turn to dust. Second, there must be a referent of the grave in relation to God. It is the New Testament which gives more light on this crucial understanding of the afterlife. For man must not be viewed only materially as a body decomposing in the grave, but also as a person with a soul, still existing in the nether world awaiting judgment or blessing.

Take for example the book of Ecclesiastes, it has one entry, Eccles. 9:10, which is a favorite text for many cults who teach soul sleep and annihilationism. The Bible Students will remark that this passage proves beyond doubt that there is a condition of unconsciousness beyond this life; and they will use this text to teach if God does not choose to awaken the person, then he goes to dust and is no more. Does this passage really say what the Bible Students want it to confirm? The

text is contrasting life and death with life as the referent, the here and now. The wisdom of this is to do all you can while you have the opportunity because when you die everything is left unfinished here among the living. It does not even hint to unconsciousness.

Take another example, the Bible Students' interpretation of Ps. 16:10 and Acts 2:27-32. Here they write, "that it applies to Jesus—that it was Jesus' soul that was not left in sheol. Thus we have an irrefutable proof that sheol is not a place of hell-fire and torment, for surely no one could think of Jesus going to such a place when he died" (The Truth About Hell, 11). Once again they interject into the text their theology regarding the resurrection of our Lord. Remember they deny a physical resurrection, therefore, they must only have His soul rise from the dead for Russell taught that His body was either vaporized or is in a tomb in heaven. Their understanding of the soul is not how we would believe because when Jesus rose from the dead, according to the Bible Students, He rose a spiritual creature—Michael the archangel. However, note chapter 2, verse 26 in the book of Acts which they are silent about, and for good reason, for this verse undermines their position. "Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will abide in hope"

(NASB). Now the question arises, if the flesh is destroyed then how could it abide in hope? Also in verse 27, "Because Thou wilt not abandon My soul to Hades, nor Thy Holy One to undergo decay" (NASB). How is it possible for both the soul not to be abandoned nor the body to decay unless Jesus rose bodily from the grave? This clear teaching of Scripture in the very passage the Bible Students use proves their theology has many cracks in its structure. Did not Thomas wonder about the risen Christ? And would not believe unless he saw Him physically? (Cf., Jn. 20:24-29). Scripture maintains what the historic belief has been, that Christ rose physically and that there is a state of awareness after death while awaiting the resurrection.

All Russellites hold to the belief that the grave is equal to oblivion. Therefore, continuing with the KJV use of sheol translated "hell" in Ps. 16:10, these Students state:

The translators must have known that the "Holy One" of this text was Jesus, yet they used the word hell to describe his condition in death, despite the fact that in most other instances where the righteous were concerned they have translated sheol by the word grave or pit. The reason for this is obvious, for they were caught in a dilemma by the fact that it is Jesus' soul that is said to be in sheol. Had they used the word grave, they would have been admitting that Jesus' soul was in the grave, in oblivion; so knowing that in the minds of the aver-

age reader hell was at least a place of life, they used it, hoping perhaps no one would inquire too diligently as to why Jesus was in hell, or what his experience there might have been. To admit, though a translation, that Jesus' soul was in the grave, the state of death, would have disproved another of the Dark Age dogmas, namely, the erroneous theory of the immortality of the soul (11-12).

Much of their error not only here but in other citations stems from their presuppositionalism to the extent that meaning must be placed into the passage in any manner which it will fit. Here they equate grave with oblivion in order for their theology to work. By using the Old Testament passage of Ps. 16:10 containing "sheol" they try to equate that the New Testament usage has the same meaning as found in the Old Testament use of Sheol. They conclude that this is definite proof that only the soul of Jesus was brought back to life, not His body; next is their insistence that sheol is the Bible hell, whereby this Bible hell is the death condition or soul sleep.

Sheol has a wide range of meaning and must be viewed by the context in which it is used. In the Old Testament it denotes the grave, or pit, a place where a dead body is placed. It is the New Testament which equates hades and sheol as a place where reward and punishment are given. Jesus Himself reveals this new revelation where there is an eternal gain and lost. Notice that hades in the New Testament can be

a place of torment (Cf., Lk. 16:23-25; 2 Pet. 2:9) during the intermediate state while awaiting the resurrection. Quite contrary to Bible Student understanding of it meaning oblivion. That this meaning is so very clear renders the Bible Students to spiritualize the citation in Luke of the rich man and Lazarus.

With the addition of God's revelation in the New Testament this subject concerning the afterlife becomes much clearer. Yet the Bible Students continue to equate hades with oblivion and do so even if the context does not demand this type of interpretation. Another example is found in Revelation. In particular Rev. 6:8 causes the Bible Students to conclude:

Here hell (hades) is represented as riding on horseback together with death. It would be difficult to imagine the great abyss of torture such as hell was supposed to be, thus riding on a horse's back. But in the symbology of this passage, no difficulty is encountered when we realize that hades and death are practically synonymous, and thus shown together in this graphic picture of destruction stalking through the earth (27).

One problem with this interpretation is the fact that hades is not riding horseback with death, but rather is following. A careful reading many times will nullify a wrong interpretation, as demonstrated here.

Another term misused by the Russellites is "gehenna." It is properly understood as a place for eternal punishment and is associated with a

final judgment. This is the eternal abode of the lost, a place beyond the intermediate state. All but one occurrence of this word is found in the Gospels. Whereas, hades represents a place for both the saved and lost, gehenna is for the lost only, and it is eternal. Its very presence in Scriptures rules out universalism, and along with hades, rules out a second chance for salvation beyond the grave. Yet, the Bible Students must somehow make even this term fit their theology of oblivion and annihilationism for the lost.

The Russellites will insist that gehenna is symbolic of those who are so incorrigible that even after a second chance for salvation in the Millennium they will not accept Jesus' ransom. Another example is taken from Mt. 18:8, 9. In this passage, as before, the Russellites must make gehenna a place of destruction. They state, "Since fire is a symbol of destruction, and quite properly so because of its destructive qualities, the expression 'everlasting fire' would simply denote everlasting destruction. Again, no torment is suggested" (34). However, what about the burning bush? Or what about Daniel's friends in the fiery furnace? Certainly fire was not always destructive. A rigid literal rendering is sometimes not good methodology for interpretation as proved by the methods of Russell and his followers.

Their view of soul-sleep and annihilation for the lost must be held no matter what the Scriptures might indicate to the contrary. The Bible Students go into the holy text with a highly biased theology, and,

Therefore, must break acceptable rules of hermeneutics. The full weight of Scripture collapses the view which they try to maintain.

The Theology of Russell's "The Christ"

Another strange teaching held by Russell and believed in by the Bible Students is the concept of "The Christ." They see the Christ not as Jesus alone, but also as the body of anointed believers making up the head and body. This is the little flock or Jehovah's anointed. The Bible Students begin their reasoning with Paul's mystery now made known to the saints (Col. 1:27), or, Christ in you. Furthermore, because Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Cf., Acts 10:18) He became Christ or the anointed. They then reason that because saints are anointed company, anointed to be kings and priests they constitute, together with Jesus, the anointed—the Christ. This is the mystery that the Christ is not one member but many.

This thinking continues with Jesus and His body, the Christ, constituting the promised "seed" (Cf., Gal. 3:29). Russell pressed his theology to claim that the Christ, both body and head, was also the deliverer, not one but a group. This group had the highest calling. However, Paul himself teaches that the seed is not referring to more than one, but rather one, singular, Christ alone (Cf., Gal. 3:16). By being one in Christ Jesus does not imply that the believer is the Christ, as the Russellites believe.

This idea of the Christ being collective members was also pushed in the direction of the resurrection.

The Bible Students believe that the first or chief resurrection is the body of Christ collectively and will point to I Cor. 15:23 and Rev. 20:4-6. The first passage does not speak of any other Christ but our Lord Jesus who died and rose from the dead alone, the first fruits of the resurrection. The assurance that one day all believers will rise in the first resurrection is future from when Christ rose. This, like other passages, demonstrates a theology seeking Scripture instead of Scripture making theology.

Russell was so sure of his idea of the Christ that he even stated "That all who accept the terms may come into the Christ-body until a sufficient number will have been found, until the foreordained number have made consecration, and made their calling and election sure. How shall we know when the full number has so consecrated? It is not for us to know! In a general way, we believe that the outward call ceased in 1881 (Jones 157). This date setting is typical of Russell. The question arises for the Bible Students that if the date was wrong perhaps then the teaching should be scrutinized, for it too might be wrong. With Russell sure of the 1914 date when the Christ would rise to heavenly glory and rule the earth, it is no wonder that he would also believe in the saints having the last call in his time. Both dates have proved him wrong.

The mediator between God and man according to Scripture is Jesus alone; also it is Jesus Himself who is the mediator of the New Covenant (Cf., I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 12:24). The

Bible Students believe otherwise. Russell wrote, "That mediator, God is getting ready now. Christ is the mediator of the new covenant—Jesus, the head of the Christ, and the church, the body of Christ, will be the great mediator, and stand between God and Israel, and all who get blessings through Israel" (187). This New Covenant was not a one time event according to Russell and his followers. Russell taught that the Christ suffered for 1800 years up to his time of writing and that the New Covenant would not begin mediating until the head and body was complete. This unique teaching of the Bible Students does not stand up to the truth of Scripture and apart from Russell's writing and teaching this idea of a collective group known as the Christ, this would not be gained from a reading of God's Word. This esoteric teaching is naturally rejected.

Russell's Divine Plan of the Ages

The Divine Plan of the Ages is a centerpiece for the Bible Students. This plan was expanded by Russell in volume one of his Studies series, The Divine Plan of the Ages; and it is this volume which many of the unsuspecting will receive in a full or condensed version upon first contact with the Bible Students. There is a chart of the plan contained, usually in a fold out inside the full version of the book.

This chart which is both central and crucial to the dating of events and Russell's theology regarding people and religious institutions throughout biblical times is a maze of lines and sections and pyramids. The chart emphasizes their steps of

the changing human nature as it goes from human to divine. The plan is broken into three main parts: plan A, plan B, plan C. Each is a dispensation with A lasting from creation to flood, and B from flood to the commencement of the Millennial reign of Christ as His second advent, and C from the beginning of Millennial age to ages to come. This is following A to C, the world that was, this world, and the world to come. In this world evil rules and the good suffer but in the world to come a reversal will occur where righteousness rules with evildoers suffering and then in the end all evil is to be destroyed.

Russell taught that Satan is the ruler of this world but not of the world (A) before the flood. This world (A) was under the supervision of special angels who were permitted to try to restore mankind. Russell's thinking for this bizarre theology was that Heb. 2:5 implies that the angels did not have authority in the world to come, therefore, they had authority in the world prior to the flood. The future world is under the dominion of Jesus and the joint heirs. Within the next dispensation (B) there is an age noted by Russell as age D age E, and age F. Age D deals with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Age E is noted as the Jewish age and includes the period of time following the death of Jacob. Age F is the gospel age. This gospel age is the age in which the body of Christ is called out of the world to be obedient as a requirement for salvation. Evil plays an interesting role according to the theology of Russell. It is permitted to exist as a testing instrument to see who will give up the human nature,

which is a living sacrifice, and conform to the death of Christ by rejecting the world.

The age to come has many ages of which one is the Millennial age (G). The ages to come (H) follows this "reconstruction period" and the Scriptures, according to Russell, are silent about this time, but there will be happiness.

Within this elaborate scheme are numerous parallel times. For example, the harvest at the close of the Jewish age (a 40 year period between 29 AD and 70 AD) which corresponds to the time of the ministry of Jesus until the destruction of the temple also refers to the end of the Jewish age and beginning of the Gospel age. There is both a harvest at the end of this age and overlapping with the new age. This same type of sequence is seen again at the close of the Gospel age with its harvest and the beginning of the Millennial age with what is also referred to as the Messianic age. In other words, the Gospel age is ending and the Millennial age with its restitution is beginning along with the overlap of the two ages. It should be remembered that for the Bible Students, the Gospel age is for the calling out of the Christ (both head and body) and that the Millennial age will be a time when many who are dead and unsaved will rise again and have a second chance for salvation. It is very easy to see familiar terms redefined in Russell's chart.

Russell continues adding to his Plan of the Ages chart with more letters. Within these ages are differing planes referred to as K, L, M, N, P, R.

Briefly: N equals the plane of perfect human nature, Adam was in this plane before he sinned; R was where Adam fell and where all mankind are now born; P is considered to be the plane of justification reckoned by sacrifices of law; N is for justified persons who have fellowship with God. The M plane is where the spiritual children are which Russell says are noted as embryo children on the plane of spirit begetting. Following is plane L which is the condition of perfect spiritual beings and entrance into this level is known as "birth," which is the condition of life as a spirit being. It is this plane that the entire church will go when selected from the world in the end of the age. Here the saints will rise from the dead and the saints alive will be changed in a moment, made perfect spiritual beings with bodies like the glorious body of Christ's. The final plane is K and here one goes beyond the spiritual perfection gained by being a spirit being to a place of glory. This glory, according to Russell, is not one of person but rather a glory of power or office shared with Christ on His throne forever.

As if this scheme is not incredible in itself, Russell correlates it to the great pyramid. And also includes many sub-points. One example refers to the path Jesus took. While on plane L, sub-point i where, after being dead for three and one half days, Jesus was raised to the perfection of a spirit being, i.e., born of the Spirit. Russell denies any continuity between the Jesus who lived and died to the Jesus who was resurrected for He became a spirit-being and was no longer a

man. Of course, the Bible has several statements to deny the view that Jesus was a spirit. He Himself tells His disciples that a spirit has not flesh and bones as He has, and also it is the "man" Christ Jesus who is the mediator between God and man.

Russell's plan is much more detailed and elaborate. This brief sketch portrays the general gist of its nature. However, it is an imposed viewpoint and does not bear up to Scripture. This elaborate maze

of Russell's confuses the natural understanding of Scripture and the true history of salvation. The chart visualizes his theology. A theology which is gaining members and a group of people who are convinced that Charles Taze Russell was correct in his understanding. Our call was spoken long ago, to correct those who oppose us with gentleness that God may grant them the repentance which leads to the knowledge of truth (2 Tim. 2:25).

Notes

1. The 1916 edition is used because it contains editorial changes made by Russell himself, along with a watered down disclaimer for the 1914 date setting. In prior editions 1914 was to be the limits of Gentile rulership, and thus the end of the world's satanic systems. This did not happen, of course, but because WWI had begun, a new reappraisal was direly needed. Nevertheless, it as a huge disappointment for the faithful followers of Russell when the world did not end.

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DIS · CÊRN' · MENT

By Jo Ann BeVier

The information blitz of our time would indeed cause any reading and thinking individual much confusion, as well as perhaps anxiety and depression. We are bombarded on every side by the "war of words" which through the printed page, the eyegate of television, computer's internet, and the movie screen competes for control of our minds.

In a recent issue of the AARP Bulletin there was an article on "making sense of medical news." It examined the health claims that often contradict one another: dietary fat increases chance for stroke—no, now it is claimed by some it decreases those chances; eggs are bad for you—no, now they aren't—now it depends on what's good for you or what information you can use or what you can ignore.

This is certainly cause for concern, but the greater concern is what are we as Christians, as members of the Body of Christ, being bombarded with? What can we reply on? Can we simply say, I rely on God's Word, what He says is true or must we be involved in all the theologians many words, debates, dialogues and interpretations?

Must we change what we believe in order to be in unity with all the "new" waves of change in our world today? Are we being swept into the chaos of accepting everything and everyone must be right so we should not disagree or "rock the boat" by holding fast to the doctrine grounded in our faith without being attacked as narrow, legalistic, exclusive and unloving.

Our world has become a place where it is no longer necessary to

have moral standards to be a leader, a pastor, or one in any area of authority. Have we become a nation who says it is not important to be a person of integrity, honesty, or with moral fiber in order to make decisions or have the mantel of leadership of many people? Do we as believers accept God's standards or those put forth by someone who has taken it upon themselves to shape their beliefs and walk of life after what they have read or heard from some finite human being?

We have come to the place where we are led by what someone has written or following the latest promotion of a new concept, a new way to deal with our problems, our concerns, or our lifestyle. Whether it be psychological answers, healing, meditation, human accountability or whatever answer is popular, it comes down to "who do you reply on?" Who do you put your trust in? Who alone has the answers to your questions and deepest needs?

Our faith is being tested in many areas. In perusing the last six months' issues of Christianity Today one could be inundated with the following concerns: the struggle and decline of mainline denominations—with a drop in membership (from 1965-1994) of 3.3% in American Baptist churches to a 51.1% decline in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); the controversy over gender "inclusive" translations which included a children's Bible and a simplified version of the NIV—do they distort Scripture?; "Missing God at Church," a treatise on "blended worship," no particular style is best; "Evangelicals and Catholics

Together: A New Initiative," what do we mean by the Gospel?; Can we change God's perfect work of redemption to include works?; A discussion answering the argument that all religions are more or less true but that Christ alone is the only way; Spiritual mapping being practiced by different groups and leaders; "the Future of Evangelical Theology," a division between traditionalists and reformists and responses from three theologians; "rediscovering the Sabbath," a return to celebrating the Jewish Sabbath, making the first day of the week which celebrates the Lord's resurrection a Sabbath (this is also being espoused by a leader of a cult ministry). All of these, plus so many other issues, controversies and heresies would put even the strongest of believers in a maelstrom of upheaval. But is this what Christianity is about? Is this the message of God in His Word? Where is our focus? Are these things that should concern us?

Is spiritual discernment something we can no longer have? Discernment means: keenness of discrimination; to perceive (American Heritage Dictionary). The Bible speaks of discernment in : Heb. 4:12; 5:14; 1 Cor. 2:9-16 (Holy Spirit teaching us); Eccl. 8:5.

Do we need to disregard what the Church Fathers and leaders of the early church wrote and believed because it doesn't fit the contemporary lifestyle of our day? Do we ignore the martyrs for the Faith such as Tyndale, Huss, Ridley, Latimer, and others who gave their lives for the preservation and propa-

gation of God's Word? Is what God and His Son, Jesus Christ, said not to be accepted as final?

Looking at some Scriptures on the subjects does help clear our vision and comfort our hearts.

In looking at the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God we read these Scriptures: John 14:26; 17:8-17; Acts 13:5, 7; 15:35; Rom. 1:2; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 4:2; Titus 1:3; Heb. 4:12; 5:13; 13:7; 1 Pet. 1:25; 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:1, 2, 15-17; 1 John 2:5; Rev. 22:9.

The Word of God speaks of the unity of the Church in the following Scriptures: John 16:12; 17:11-17; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:10; 2:22, 23; 4:4-16; 5:23, 30.

Concerning doctrine (teaching): Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Tim. 3:10, 16, 17; 4:3; Titus 2:7, 10; 2 John 9, 10; and warnings against false teaching: Col. 2:8; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 4:3; Heb. 13:9; Rev. 2:14, 15.

To reiterate our standing (not under the Law of Moses): Gal. 3:11-14, 22-27; 4:4-10, 22-31.

Some passages regarding the Lord's Day (first day of the week): Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1, 2; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Sabbath, Mk. 2:27, 28.

There are many other passages on these various subjects, but these are a few.

Interestingly, there have been a number of publications writing on the ecumenical "winds of change" today and unifying of churches toward a super-one-world church. This was noted in a recent periodical

which cited an article by the secular media, The Los Angeles Times, entitled, "Breaking Denominational Barriers: Winds of Ecumenism Blow Through Christian Churches." The writer presents the changes that are taking place, the "playing down of division among Christians of all denominations." He also noted that such ecumenical activity hasn't been so prevalent since the 1960s.

There has been conflict between fundamentalism and liberalism (at one period called modernism) since the 1800s. Many leaders left the "fundamentalist camp" to escape what they felt was a negative term. There was great controversy in the 1920s and early 1930s. It was, and is, a divisive issue.

The subject is dealt with in a reprinted article from Eternity magazine, 1957, by Dr. John F. Walvoord in a clear manner. The conclusion stating that:

The fundamentals of Christian faith continue to be based upon inerrant Scripture, upon the deity of Christ and His virgin birth, upon His substitutionary death upon the cross, and His bodily resurrection and future literal return. These are unmistakably the fundamentals. Biblical faith is much more than an undefined evangelicalism. Perhaps we need a new term. Until such is devised, however, let us not dodge our sacred responsibility to stand squarely on the fundamentals of Christian faith revealed in the infallible Word of God.

BOOK REVIEWS

Jehovah's Witnesses—Their Monuments to False Prophecy

By Edmond C. Gruss with Leonard Chretien

Reviewed by Jo Ann BeVier

This 307 page book was published in 1997. It is for those who study Jehovah's Witnesses, who work and minister with and to Jehovah's Witnesses, and is an exhaustive resource of information. It is filled with photocopies of deeds, records, pictures, and eye-witness accounts documenting the doctrinal changes and false prophecies of the movement.

Each chapter is written as a free-standing unit, but the chapters are interconnected. There are also summaries of each chapter in the

Introduction, Chapter 1.

Both the author and his associate in this project are former Jehovah's Witnesses and have much knowledge and insight into this subject.

This book, by its nature, is one of interest to many who want further evidence and proof about the JW's, so Religion Analysis Service has given this brief review. We will not be carrying the book at the present time, but you may purchase it by contacting: Witness Inc., PO Box 597, Clayton, CA 94517.

Seventh-day Adventism and the Writings of E. G. White

By J. Mark Martin

Reviewed by Jo Ann BeVier

In this book of 55 pages the author points out in his preface that Adventism is the reflection of Ellen G. White. She shaped it and with the guidance of her writings made the church what it is today. Therefore, to examine what she wrote is to see the true foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Mark White surveys these particular areas: "A Survey of Statements Made by Mrs. White Which Contradict the Bible"; "A Survey of Additions Which Mrs. White makes to the Scriptures"; "Mrs. White Contradicts Herself"; "Mrs. White Says That Adventism's Message and Her Writings Stand or Fall Together."

Ellen G. White is considered the prophetess of Seven-day Adventism, therefore, her writings are called "The Spirit of Prophecy." It is pointed out in their response "The White Truth" published by the Adventist church in 1981 which was a response to the discovery of Mrs. White's plagiarism (see Walter T. Rea's The White Lie) that "What we are as a church is a reflection of our faith in the divine authority evident in the writings of Ellen G. White."

One of the areas of obvious error are the predictions of Ellen G. White—they did not come true! The author uses Scripture to point out the contradictions and errors. One of the main tenants of Seventh-day

Adventism is their observance of the seventh day Sabbath. They teach that the seal of God is the Sabbath, yet Mrs. White broke the Sabbath for a time by keeping it from 6 p.m. Friday to 6 p.m. Saturday, instead of from sunset to sunset (Lev. 23:32). She later did have a vision to correct this "sacrilege."

The contradictions of Scripture are very clear and certainly should be examined by all who would have

friends or family involved with the Seventh-day Adventists and also for your information.

The book is written clearly and in large print. RAS is carrying it in place of the one listed in the present 1997-99 Catalog, Ellen G. White and Inspiration, which we can no longer obtain. The price is: \$5.00, plus postage and handling (Catalog number SD-5).

The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists

By Dale Ratzlaff

Reviewed by Rev. Ervin Ingebretson

Any literary work gains immeasurable credibility when the author writes from personal experience. Dale Ratzlaff and his wife were both fourth generation Seventh-day Adventists. The author served as an Adventist high school teacher for seven years and as a pastor for a number of years.

The father of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) movement was William Miller whose primary doctrinal issue was a prediction that Christ would return to earth in 1843. When this failed, he set another date in 1844. When this also failed it is asserted today that he proposed two doctrines which have been the cornerstone of the SDA movement.

Based on Leviticus, chapter 16, and Daniel 8:14, Ellen G. White claimed Miller proposed that Christ entered the Most Holy Place in the Heavenly Sanctuary October 22, 1844 to cleanse it, thus to complete the "atonement." [Hiram Edson generally is credited with this discovery. Ed.] From there Christ would carry out an investigative judgment of all believers going back to Adam.

Ratzlaff points up ten areas in

which Miller uses faulty Scriptural hermeneutics. He also discredits the theological stance of Ellen G. White, considered the true propheticess of the SDA movement, as she almost wholly supports the work of William Miller even after the failed predictions of the return of Christ.

The author points up the vacillation of SDA leaders, particularly Ellen G. White, on doctrinal issues. This has led to three or four branches of the SDA movement.

Ratzlaff lists fifteen cult characteristics and determines that the SDA groups, except "Evangelical Adventists," meet fully at least nine of these characteristics.

He challenged the larger Adventist body to review their doctrines clearly on the basis of Scriptural truth. With proper revision they could remove themselves from the cultic identification.

From his experience, the author speaks clearly and forcefully on primary issues which legitimately classify the SDA movement as apart from traditional, Biblical, mainstream Christianity.

Part Way to Utah—The Forgotten Mormons

By Paul T. Trask

Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson

The author relates in detail the historical, doctrinal, and progressive development of the Mormon Church with a special emphasis on The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). Mr. Trask's purpose in writing is to help the reader understand the similarities and the differences between the "Mormon" Church and the RLDS.

The most common geographical identity of the Mormon Church is Salt Lake City, the final settlement of the followers of Joseph Smith, Jr. Less known is the town of Independence, Missouri, the site chosen by RLDS for the American "Zion." One assertion made by The Book of Mormon is that Jesus Christ appeared to Nephites (a group of Israelites led from Jerusalem to the Americas around 600 BC) proclaiming this land to be the chosen spot for the New Jerusalem.

There was a lot of instability in the early development of the Mormon Church. Multiple factions developed. In late 1851 some leaders of independent congregations requested that Joseph Smith, Jr's son, Joseph Smith, III, become their leader. In 1852 some scattered congregations organized and became The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints with Joseph Smith, III as their leader.

The movement of RLDS followers to Independence, Missouri progressed slowly, but eventually this city was adopted as their headquarters. Under one of the sons of

Joseph, III, then President, the RLDS underwent significant liberalization which caused "fundamentalist" groups to break away adopting "Restored" as part of their name.

According to the author, the surviving RLDS church has become increasingly "liberal." They now openly promote "pluralism" which teaches that God authored and is at work in all world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and that salvation can be found in them all. Mr. Trask lays out a variety of unorthodox "scriptures" produced by the Mormons and their corresponding beliefs. Joseph Smith, Jr. generated four books of "scripture" which describe the basis for the organization and operation of the Mormon Church and, with one small exception, for the RLDS. The formation of a priesthood based on Melchizedek and Aaron is a cornerstone of the doctrinal operation of the Mormon churches. The author meticulously interprets Biblical truth in these areas and shows the disparity of this truth in Mormon beliefs. Where Biblical references are used by Mormons, the context is obviously ignored.

Mr. Trask emphasizes that we must realize the RLDS people have been led down forbidden paths fraught with false prophets. This treatise would be most helpful in any conversation the Lord provides with an RLDS person(s) concerning their eternal destiny.

Astronomy And the Bible

By Donald B. DeYoung

Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson

What does the Bible say about astronomy—celestial bodies and their motions? The author, a professional astronomer with full academic credentials, affirms the proposition acclaimed by David that God was the great designer and creator of the universe (Ps. 8:3-4; Ps. 19:1). He attempts to balance the evolutionary and secular view of science in most astronomy books with a Christian perspective.

Dr. DeYoung employs a unique format in his book. It is the result of hundreds of questions asked of him in his lectures and seminars. Each question is asked in the text and then answered with the author's explanation. The questions are divided into six general subject categories.

Because of the technical nature of the subject of astronomy, a number of questions possess that flare. The final section deals with the more seriously technical questions and answers.

A sample question asked of the author is as follows: "Is the earth at the center of the universe?" The author responds by saying that the earth is the spiritual center of the universe and the purpose of stars relate directly to the earth to provide a calendar system and give glory to God.

Another question: "Was the

fourth day of creation twenty-four hours long?" In spite of myriad acknowledged questions about the "creation" week, the author believes in literal twenty-four hour periods. He states that this activity of God is supernatural and defies human explanation for every phase of it.

In section three, a sample question is: "What was the Star of Bethlehem?" The author shows why this star could not be a comet, or a conjunction of planets which are attempts to explain this mysterious phenomenon. Dr. DeYoung concludes that this star was a temporary and supernatural light as other heavenly lights described in Scripture.

In section four: "What is the Big Bang theory?" The author proceeds to systematically discredit this theory for many reasons but primarily for its attempt to replace what really happened—God spoke and the earth appeared.

Dr. DeYoung responds technically and spiritually to some intensely interesting questions concerning heavenly bodies and their movements. He carefully relates this subject to the Scriptures.

(This book may be purchased from RAS for \$9.00, plus postage and handling.)

DELETIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE 1997-99 CATALOG

The following books are either Out-of-Print or Out-of-Stock.

OUT-OF-PRINT

Are the Mormon Scriptures Reliable? p. 24

Babylon Mystery Religion p. 33

Christian Science (by Martin) p. 9

Dawning of the Pagan Moon p. 2

Death and Beyond p. 47

OUT-OF-PRINT continued

- Jehovah's Witnesses on Trial p. 18
Maranatha p. 50
Playing With Fire p. 12
Threeness and Oneness of God p. 21
Witnessing to Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses p. 20
Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth p. 49

OUT-OF-STOCK

(unavailable at the present time)

- Ellen G. White and Inspiration (replaced by new book) p. 36
Five Leading Cults in the U.S. p. 3
Martial Arts p. 11

ADDITIONS

(new or restocked books)

- Astronomy and the Bible LEV-21 (\$9.00 – see review)
Babylon Connection RC-1 (same author – same price)
Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventism SD-11 (\$11.95 – see review)
New "Life After Death" Religion TDH-15 (restocked — \$1.50)
Part Way to Utah: the Forgotten Mormons (RLDS) MO-45 (\$15.00 – see review)
Rosicrucians: What They Believe ER-11 (\$1.35 – restocked)
Seventh-day Adventism and Writings of E. G. White SD-5 (\$5.00 – see review)
TM: What They Believe MS-30 (\$1.35 – restocked)

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