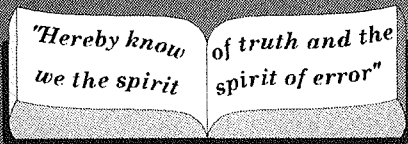


The Discerner



Volume 18, Number 2

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AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL HERESY-EXPOSING QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

By William A. BeVier

This issue of The Discerner is late in publication because we undertook the major project of revising our entire mailing list. This is something which has not been done for over ten years. It has taken our four volunteers months to complete this task.

One impact this revision has made on The Discerner is that we are removing subscriptions listed as "PERM" on the labels, i.e., "Permanent." We discovered that some "PERMs" have long been home with the Lord. Most of these individuals were those who in the past have been major financial supporters of R.A.S. These subscriptions are now being changed to XX-4, December 2000. This means we will need to review our subscription list again by December 2000. It does not mean we believe the world is going to end by December of the year 2000, and it does not mean our computer program will not go beyond that date. (Tim Buege, our Associate Editor and computer "guru" has taken care of that).

We do not send out notices when subscriptions are expiring (we consider it too expensive), so it means we need to examine our labels after receiving each issue. This year, 1998, is Volume 18, and the issues are numbered 1-4. If your label reads "XVIII-2" it means your subscription expires with this issue.

We also discovered in reviewing our mailing list how many people have given gift subscriptions to others. If you know of someone who you believe would profit from The Discerner send them a gift subscription. If you inform us, we can either notify the individual who provided the gift, or you can remain anonymous.

Our articles in this issue cover a variety of subjects.

A current issue receiving attention, both in Christian and secular realms, is that of whether or not the Bible contains some secret code which has meaning for today. Dr. Roy Knuteson has researched this subject and provided for us a well-written review of the topic.

We increasingly are facing the issue today of what the Bible really says about justification of the believer. What's involved? How does it happen? David Cook, one of our former Board members, has done a study focusing primarily on what Paul and James wrote on the subject pertaining to grace and works. If you haven't considered this subject recently, I believe you will find his article interesting. This is not a subject in which we can afford to be wrong.

Thomas Sheehey has provided us an article in an area which he has been studying for some time, that of the Oneness Pentecostal movement, e.g., deniers of the Trinity. The subject of this article really relates to an example of extreme legalism evidenced in this movement. Incidentally, he and Steve Lagoon are currently preparing a book dealing with the subject of Oneness Pentecostalism.

Our concluding article in this issue is a short one by Colleen Tinker, Managing Editor of the publication "Adventist Today." She was kind enough to share this update with us of what is happening in Seventh-day Adventism. The orga-

nization is again in turmoil over a book written by one of their former pastors and teachers, Dale Ratzlaff (we reviewed one of his books in the last issue of The Discerner). Those who have followed developments in Seventh-day Adventism since the 1980s and remember the departure of Desmond Ford, Walter T. Rea and about 150 other SDA pastors and teachers will recognize what's taking place. The SDAs have for many years claimed to be "evangelical" Christians, and have convinced many this is true, e.g., Walter Martin. However, as both non-Seventh-day Adventists as well as former Seventh-day Adventists have pointed out, this is not true as long as the SDA denomination (controlled by the White Foundation) holds to Ellen G. White as an inspired prophetess and to her claimed visions and revelations, such as the Investigative Judgment (one of many).

We also have in this issue reviews of three new books we are stocking. We continue to have over 600 items in stock to help us in our service in the cause of Christ in this generation. Check our Catalog for details.

A BIBLE WITHIN THE BIBLE?

By Roy E. Knuteson, Ph.D.

The Bible Code phenomenon has captured international attention. National magazines and television programs are featuring the finds of the decoding experts. Christian authors are writing best-sellers both pro and con on this fascinating subject.

The idea behind a Bible Code is the belief that there is encoded within the "Torah" – the first five books of the Bible – information about modern times that simply shouldn't be there. This is not the work of sensational pop writers. Rather, some very prominent Jewish physicists like Doram Witztum, Eliyahu Rips, and Gerald Shroeder have been working to uncover these encoded words by computer technology.

Their work has been based, in part, upon the work of the great holocaust hero Rabbi Weissmandl. This respected scholar manually counted the Hebrew letters of the Torah, and found, for example, that in the sequential spacing of 49 letters, Abraham's name appears in Genesis 1:22-26 and between the letters of his name there is an occurrence of "Elohim," one of the names of God. Because of this unusual arrangement, Weissmandl concluded that God's name was *deliberately* inserted into Abraham's name thus providing additional proof that the Torah was from the Lord.

The results of this recent scholarly research was so convincing that Witztum, Rips, and Shroeder,

although then professed atheists, have converted to Orthodox Judaism. The code, they say, points to only one thing: the authorship of the document in which it is found and that author is God.

Dr. Harold Gans, formerly Sr. Cryptologic Mathematician and meritorious Civil Service honoree at the National Security Agency of the United States Department of Defense, published his amazing discoveries in the highly respected and refereed scientific journal STATISTICAL SCIENCE. This publication astounded the mathematical world and resulted also in the return of Gans to Orthodox Judaism.

These scholarly findings have now been popularized by Michael Drosnin's book THE BIBLE CODE, and by Jeffery Satinover's book CRACKING THE BIBLE CODE. Christian researcher and popular author Grant Jeffrey has written two books: THE SIGNATURE OF GOD and THE HANDWRITING OF GOD endorsing the idea of Bible codes as authentic proof that the Bible is a revelation of God. A Christian and a secular TV special are now in the making to further endorse the Bible code phenomenon. I have been personally involved in these projects as a consultant and critic.

The Language of Secrets

What are Bible codes anyway? It is the claim that God not only com-

municated His word through the plain text of the Bible, but that He also encoded words in the Torah, and the books of Isaiah and Daniel, which could only be discovered through advance computer technology and a program called skipped-letter encryption. This is also known as Equidistant Letter Sequencing (ELS). These findings are claimed, by some, to be the “sealed Book” of Daniel 12:4.

Here is how it works: In my Israeli-produced computer program on Bible Codes I can type in, for example, the name of Prime Minister Netanyahu, and behold, his name occurs once in Daniel 3 with an ELS spacing of 31 letters; once in Daniel 8 with an ELS of 71 letters and again in Daniel 11 with an ELS of 171.

Based on this discovery, plus the word “assassin” and a date in a cluster, Michael Drosnin attempted to warn the Prime Minister that he would be killed as Yitshak Rabin was. However, the date passed without incident because Netanyahu was in Jordan at the time. This is why Satinover insists that the Bible Codes cannot be used as prophecies. He writes: “To be known to the person looking, the date must already be in *his* past.... We can only discover the ones that occurred after the fact.... If you didn’t know the date associated with a given event (or person) you couldn’t search for it, let alone measure its statistical significance.”

A Cryptological Phenomenon

How can we explain the possibilities of these words occurring in the Equidistant Letter Sequencing? The

world-class mathematicians and probabilists are confounded by this since the seeming impossibility of such ELSs occurring is one in ten million. Based on the law of compound probability, this couldn’t just happen by chance.

Many startling discoveries have been made, such as the names and birthdates of the 66 great sages of Israel’s history, plus modern names like Sadat, Arafat, Hussein, and hundreds of others. The code specialists admit that the finding of these alone do not constitute proofs of anything since almost anyone’s name, transliterated into Hebrew, can be found in the first five books of the Bible. What constitutes a genuine code, they say, is when you find ELSs for two or more related facts that you have decided to look for.

It should be noted that these coded words do not always appear in proper Hebrew sequence from right to left. They are also found in reversed spelling and in vertical and angled formations in the Hebrew text. Such sequences opens the door to innumerable possibilities as you can see. It is these “clustered words” that motivates the proponents of Bible codes. It is the *overall* degree of compact clustering of related words of equidistant intervals – not individual samples – that is so convincing to them.

Satinover says: “The amount of information encoded into a finite text by using the same configuration of letters to embody multiple meanings is self-evidently beyond the capacity of any human being (or group) with whatever computing resources.”

What shall we say to all of this? Is the code for real? Is it possible that they have discovered something in this end of the age that is a part of the explosion of knowledge that is predicted in Daniel 14:4? Is this God's final revelation to man that His words are true? The Aish Hatorah Rabbinical College in Old Jerusalem thinks so and therefore sponsors widely respected international education programs to promote their findings. Many books, pamphlets, and internet articles are now available offering "irrefutable evidence" that the Bible is the Word of God. Grant Jeffrey claims this is "one of the most outstanding and tremendous Biblical discoveries in the last two thousand years!"

It must be admitted that many of the findings are stunning. For example, Jesus' name (Yeshua) is found encoded six times in Isaiah 53, a well-known prophecy of the suffering Savior. The words "Blood of Jesus" (Dam Yeshua) are found four times in Leviticus in sequences of 3 to 884 letters. Many Christians have become excited by these interesting and rather confirming evidences for their faith.

The Danger and Deception

While notable scholars have endorsed the idea of Bible codes, there are many equally reputable scholars who regard the entire subject as nonsense and do not want to become further involved. For the discerning and knowledgeable Christian, there are many obvious and some not so obvious problems with this whole concept of Bible codes. Here are ten reasons why I

believe we must reject Bible codes as very dangerous and deceptive.

1. As one who believes in the total inspiration of the Bible, I ask the question: Why limit the search to the Pentateuch, Isaiah, and Daniel? If this is truly of God codes should be found almost everywhere in His divine revelation because all is equally "God-breathed" according to 2 Timothy 3:16.
2. Some, like Drosnin, try to support the codes by the scriptural setting in which they are found. However, my examination of his claims have shown him to interpret verses entirely out of their contexts to support his claim. The same is true of Rabbi Weissmandl's understanding of Genesis 1:22-26 to support his contention that Abraham should be "fruitful and multiply."
3. Many Christian authors have claimed that the "Yeshua Code" proves that Jesus is the promised Messiah, and some evangelists are using these findings to try to convert skeptical Jews. However, the same methods of proving Jesus is divine can be used to prove He is not. The encoded words "false prophet" intersect His name in several places. If one argues that Jesus is the Messiah because His name is found in Daniel 9:25-27, it can also be argued that Rev. Moon is the Messiah because his name is encoded in the same passage in smaller gaps than "Yeshua." To use the code as a polemic for Christianity is unwise, illegitimate, and counter-productive. It must not be done.

4. If these encoded words were recorded by God at the time of the revelation through the writers of Scripture, then they must by their very timing be prophecies. However, even as some of the proponents admit, no information is forth-coming from the codes that has not already been pre-selected by the computer operator. The prophetic element then disappears altogether. In fact, there are numerous examples of coded prophecies that didn't happen when predicted.
5. It can be granted that the Torah was given to Moses word by word as the Rabbis claim. Some of it was actually written by the "finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). Another given is that the scribes were very meticulous in their transcription of the text and we do have a remarkably consistent text, as proven by the discoveries of the Dead Sea Scrolls. However, the Massoretic text, which is the basis of the Old Testament, does have some scribal errors as indicated by R. Kittle's BIBLIA HEBRAICA, which is the basis of most all the translations. The proponents admit that a mere 78 deletions or word changes would erase the code entirely.
6. Previously, I noted that the words "Blood of Jesus" can be found encoded in the book of Leviticus, but so also can be found the words "Blood of (David) Koresh," and "The Blood of Satan." In fact, the "Devil's blood" occurs twice as many times in Leviticus as does "Jesus' Blood." This observation invalidates all these claims for the divine inspiration of Bible codes.
7. The concept of Bible codes has been tried on a Hebrew translation of the large novel by Leo Tolstoy called WAR AND PEACE and behold: the name "Yeshua" appears there over 10,000 times in skip distances of up to 850 letters. If any document is long enough and if code spacing is used up to 10,000 letters, almost any name and message can be found.
8. God Himself has declared: "Come near to me, listen to this: From the first, I have not spoken in secret" (Isaiah 48:16, NASB). It is therefore a waste of time to look for something that God says He would not do.
9. While we are encouraged that these Hebrew scholars have been converted from outright atheism to Orthodox Judaism through their work on the Bible codes, they have fallen short of salvation through Jesus Christ. The codes have not led them to the Savior who is the theme of the entire Bible. God has not hidden His Messiah in either Testament.
10. Finally, in the words of Dave Hunt: "God's truth is not reserved for an elite group of mathematicians or computer scientists. If we hold to the fact that the Word of God is sufficient in itself and that the Holy Spirit uses it to teach all believers, then our time would be well spent searching out not some hidden code, but the doctrines that are clearly taught and then living them out daily to the glory of God."

CONVERSION AND TESTIMONY IN GOSPEL JUSTIFICATION

By David A. Cook, M.A.

Introduction

Interpretation and application of the Bible can often be a challenging and an adventuresome discipline. The Biblical subject of “justification” offers such a dilemma to many students of the Bible. This discrepancy or dilemma arises when one considers, for example, the “Biblical way or method” to be justified. In Romans 3:28, the writer states that a person is justified by the method of faith and faith-alone: “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (NASB version cited). And yet in the book of James, the writer states, contrary (quote-unquote) to Romans 3:28 that a person is justified by the method of works and not by faith-alone: “You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone” (James 2:24).

When briefly passing over these two verses from a more casual perspective, some people have unfortunately precluded that there may be real contradiction in the Bible. Yet this is not the case as will be shown later in this article. Other interpreters, false-teachers, would confuse and join both methods of justification, and teach that salvation or justification are merited before God by doing “good” works combined with faith. Cultic teachers, like Mormon minister Bruce McConkie, officially quote Mormon sources that wrongly

mix justification by “faith plus works” when he states, for example: “Thus Nephi wrote: ‘Be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do’ (2 Nephi 25:23)” (Mormon Doctrine, Bruce McConkie, p. 671. Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1966; see also: pp. 328-31). Or take for example, Jehovah Witnesses who have mixed “faith plus works” as well in their method of justification, in order to try “to be acceptable to God.”

Christian Faith. To be acceptable to God, it is now necessary for one to exercise faith in Jesus Christ, and this makes possible a righteous standing with God.... Additionally, there must be works consistent with and in display of faith, but works of the Mosaic Law are not required. (James 2:21-26; Rom. 3:20). (Insight On The Scriptures, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Vol. I, p. 805, 1988).

A third and final example of how false teachers mix faith and good works in justification, thus trying in vain to merit eternal life, please note Roman Catholic framers of the Council of Trent.

Canon 32. If anyone says that the good works of the one justified...; or that the one justified by the good works..., does not truly merit an increase of grace,

eternal life... let him be anathema." (The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent transl. Rev. H. J. Schroeder, Tan Books and Publishers, p. 36, 1978).

Setting aside some of the double talk in these documented examples, the cultist pattern here is an incurable attempt to misread Paul's and James' doctrine of justification by combining them together as a confusing mixture. Consequently, this inevitably leads to inconsistency and serious error. Paul warns Titus in regard to the error of self-righteousness before God: "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Mixing man's "righteous" deeds with God's saving mercy is not consistent. In light of Paul's words in Titus 3:5, principles for Biblical interpretation, properly applied, would still instruct the reader to render these two previous texts (Romans 3:28; James 2:24) in a harmonious way, yet apart from inconsistency.

Where a transaction is carried out by means of several documents so that together they form part of a single whole, these documents are to be read together as one.... [They are to be so read] that, the construction is to be preferred which will render them consistent. (Interpretation of Documents, Sir Roland Burrows, p. 49, Butterworth and Co., London, 1946).

Therefore, the interpreter's task is to render a meaningful construction of Romans 3:28 and James 2:24 that is both unified and consistent. Since the solution in this matter, about justification by faith or by works, is definitely not to mix them together like "apples and oranges" (Cf., Eph. 2:8, 9); another solution, quite bona fide, ancient and preferable, is offered by this writer.

It is simply this, James and Paul are speaking to entirely distinct: 1. Purposes, 2. Contexts and terms. The following analysis will demonstrate then, that on the one hand, Paul was referring to justification by faith: 1. Contextually before God and 2. In order to correct a dead-works heresy, by using specific Pauline terms and phrases ("faith in Christ," and "works of the law"). It is a Gospel converting kind of justification. In distinction to that kind of justification, James was alluding to justification by works: 1. Contextually before man, and 2. In order to correct a dead-faith heresy, by using generic terms and phrases ("faith and works"). James' gospel is a gospel testifying kind of justification.

Body

The starting point in this analysis of Paul and James involves the two different purposes or themes for writing their perspective letters. For Paul, in Romans 1:16-17, his key verse addresses "the Gospel as God's power of Righteousness," for it states:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who

believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." [Emphasis mine]

In the book of Romans, Paul wishes to maintain that a man both receives and walks in righteousness from God by faith, from start to finish. In Romans 3:20, Paul then addresses a false view about this justification. The false view is that fallen man instinctively tries to make himself righteous before God by works (of the law), and so Paul counters this thinking, "...because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight...."

A works-righteousness view is very pervasive in the world (Rom. 3:19), yet the Apostle says, that no man can earn their way to heaven that way. Paul was correcting a dead-works heresy as such, because man must have only faith in God.

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.... Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.... (Romans 3:28; 4:4, 5).

In fact, notice that the word for faith is used twenty-six times from chapter 3:22 to 5:1; contrariwise the subject of dead works. The writer to the Hebrews also echoes the importance of faith and the caution of works-righteousness, "...not laying

again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God..." (Heb. 6:1). Also, significantly involved in understanding Paul's purpose in justification is a very important contextual issue, which now needs to be emphasized and incorporated.

In the contextual flow, Paul refers to whom or before whom a sinner is justified. It is God. It is then a "theological" context, a man to God topic. Notice the following phrases in Romans 3-5 which indicate this theological perspective: 1. Chapter 3:2, "no flesh will be justified in His sight." 2. Chapter 4:2, "for if Abraham was justified by works he has something to boast about; but not before God." 3. Chapter 4:7, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU" in the sight of Him whom he believed, even GOD"; [Emphasis mine] and also, 4. Chapter 5:1, "THEREFORE having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ [Emphasis mine].

Not only is Paul's purpose to: 1. Proclaim justification by faith and 2. Correct a dead-works heresy and 3. Not only is Paul's context "theological" (i.e., man before God), but Paul is careful to adopt phrases and terms like: "faith in or through Jesus Christ" (3:22, 24, 25, 26; 4:24; 5:1) and "works of the Law" (3:20, 27, 28; 4:13; Cf., Gal. 2:16), to carry the argument against a work's righteousness. In Paul, "faith" is a very positive term because it is faith in Christ not in works; and contrariwise "works" is a very negative term, because it is a works in self-righteousness that Paul is discouraging.

Lastly, the two examples of David and Abraham were used “theologically” in regard to conversion (Cf., Genesis 15:6 and Psalm 32:1-2). In Romans 4:6-8, Paul talks about David’s sins before God; and in chapter 4, he discusses Abraham’s sins before God. Both O.T. people were justified by God’s grace, and not by works. Therefore, a working proposition for Paul would read, “A sinner’s standing is declared to be righteous (i.e., justified) **BEFORE GOD** by faith.” Paul’s purposes, contexts, terms and examples are not the same as they are in the book of James for there the discussion must now turn.

In the book of James, the key verse is found in chapter 1:4-6, which reads: “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James is writing his letter to encourage his readers toward a genuine kind of faith, that is to be maturing, fulfilling and practical. In chapter 2:14-26, he further instructs his readers to live-out productive lives. The writer is also discouraging a false teaching among his readers, which could be labeled a “dead-faith” heresy.” There were some among their ranks who were only mere professors of faith, that is, impostors as such, who demonstrated a useless testimony. Therefore, James admonishes these readers to vindicate or justify their professed claim to faith by means of works. The writer begins to counter a useless or dead-

faith by the statements in chapter 2:14, 17: “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?... Faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.”

As has already been stated in Romans 3:28 that Paul says a man is justified by faith apart from works, but James boldly remarks: “...a man is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24).

The solution to this alleged paradox is found by turning again to the contextual issue and ask “who is the justifying one?” Context is critical, because: “Many a passage of Scripture will not be understood at all without the help afforded by the context; and many a sentence derives all its point and force from the connection in which it stands.” (Biblical Hermeneutics, Terry, M. S., New York: Hunt & Eaton, p. 117, 1895).

While it has been demonstrated that Paul’s contextual flow was theological (man to God), James’ contextual reference on the other hand is overwhelmingly social (man to man) and practical. In James’ context, a man is justified before man. Notice the following phrases in James 2:14-26 which indicate this new social perspective (underlining/adapting mine): 1. Chapter 2:14, “if a man says... (to you implied)” he has faith; 2. Chapter 2:16, “and one of you says to them...”; 3. Chapter 2:18, “But someone may well say... (to you: implied)”; 4. Chapter 2:18, (you: implied) show me your faith... I will show you my faith by my works; 5. Chapter 2:22, “You (plural) see that (his: implied) faith was working...”; and finally, the key verse, 6. “You

(plural) see, a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." With further amplification this verse may read, "You-all see (i.e., before all of your eyes) a man (of professing faith) is justified (vindicated) by works." In chapter 2:14-26, there are persons who are: saying, showing and seeing. Whether it is speech that is spoken (2:14, 15, 18) or sights that are seen (2:18, 22, 24), in James the reference in justification is social and not theological. The social context is corroborated in Unger's Bible Handbook when it states: "1. James uses the term "justified" in the sense of actually proved or demonstrated to be righteous before men; Paul uses the term in the sense of being judicially declared righteous before God. James is speaking manward, Paul, Godward." (Unger's Bible Handbook, Merrill F. Unger, Moody Press, p. 615, 1967).

Not only is James' purpose to: 1. Proclaim justification by works, and not only is James' purpose to 2. Correct a dead-faith heresy, and 3. Not only is James' context "social" (i.e., man before man), but James is also careful to adopt different phrases and terms than Paul used. James uses simply "works" (2:14-26) in a good and general sense. James is positive with works; whereas, Paul is negative on "works of the law." James is negative on faith (2:14-26), because he is addressing a false view of faith, which speaks about a faulty mere-profession, a dead-faith heresy. James is not talking about the false doctrine of works-righteousness.

Lastly, the two examples of Abraham and Rahab are used sociologically in regards to the giving of

testimony, or proven witness before men, for indicating genuine faith (Gen. 22:1-19 and Joshua 2:1-21). In James 2:22, 24, James says twice, "You see,... You see" that Abraham was justified,... that is, before the eyes of James' readers, he was justified. When Abraham "lifted the knife over his son at the altar," James' readers saw Abraham's faith! Abraham was justified manward by works. James is referring to Abraham's life in Genesis 22 for a distinct purpose, that faith is demonstrated to other men by works alone. Paul doesn't refer to Genesis 22, rather he refers to Genesis 15 for a quite distinctive purpose, that God justifies man by faith alone. Rahab fits James' purpose as well, that genuine faith produces works. Therefore, a working proposition for James would read: "A Christian's standing is declared to be righteous (i.e., vindicated) BEFORE MAN by works."

James' references, purpose, contexts, correctives, terms and examples are wholly different from Paul's, but not contradictory in doctrine. Even James teaches justification before God is by faith, and he uses Genesis 15:6 as support, "...and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, **AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS**" (James 2:23) [Emphasis mine].

James emphasizes that what a person believes, he then does. Genuine faith produces works (Ch. 1:6, endurance). Abraham the "receiver of the word" (Ch. 1:21) became the "doer of the word" (Ch. 1:25), and so fulfilled the Scripture. Genuine saving faith testifies to

manifold benefit, both in salvation and also in practical good works (James 2:14).

Conclusion and Application

Having explained that the Bible discusses justification from two different contexts and purposes, it is time to conclude and make application. First, it must be understood that there is a justification that is transacted before God by the method of faith (Romans 5:1). Also, there is another justification that James talks about that is transacted before man by the method of works (James 2:24). There are also two correlated false-teachings connected with these contexts. When someone tries to be justified before God by works-righteousness (Romans 3:20; Luke 16:15), it is called heresy of dead-works (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14).

On the other hand, when someone tries to be justified before man with mere-profession apart from works (James 2:14-26), it is called the heresy of dead-works (James 2:17, 26).

Second, it must be clarified in one's understanding that salvation is by grace and grace-alone. God's true

grace is realized when one places genuine faith in Christ-alone for justification. This transaction brings true salvation as Ephesians 2:8, 9 informs the believer: "For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

And yet, Paul further encourages Christian believers to walk at all times in good works. These works (empowered by faith) are both subsequent to and in completion of the salvation experience: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Good works do not get anyone saved, but because a person is saved, they become very important and bring manifold benefit for they: 1. Testify to genuine saving-faith, 2. Have practical use to others, and 3. Glorify God (James 2:14-17; 1 Peter 1:1-7; 5:12). In Gospel Justification then, both 1. The receiving of conversion before God by faith, and 2. The giving of a testimony before man by works have their proper place and purpose.

THE UNITED PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, ONENESS PENTECOSTALISM, AND A WOMAN'S HAIR

By Thomas D. Sheehy

Perhaps you're reading this thinking "Why on earth would anyone devote an entire article to, of all things, hair?"

That's a good question.

The answer is because to Oneness Pentecostals, such as the United Pentecostal Church, International (UPCI), it is one of grave importance, and not one which Christians can waffle on. To oneness Pentecostals, cutting one's hair is as important to them as the issue of blood transfusions is to the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Should the reader question this, one need only look at the evidence. Consider, for example, that when Robert Sabin, former pastor of Apostolic Bible Church (St. Paul, Minnesota) broke away from the UPCI in 1992 regarding having to sign a statement that they would abide by their "standard of holiness" (which included not cutting a woman's hair), Sabin was believed to have committed the unpardonable sin. Today he is still spoken of as an apostate by members of the UPCI in the Twin Cities area, and perhaps the entire nation.

The evidence grows. On the cover of the book titled My Hair, My Glory, by Jill Jasinski, a demon hangs above the head of a woman (who just happens to be studying the Bible) with a pair of garden shears,

waiting to lop off her long locks of hair.

But this is also a subject which I happen to have difficulty "attacking." I happen to find women's long hair attractive. What I object to is their belief that women with short hair are unspiritual. That is, women with short hair, regardless of whether or not they are a pastor's wife or a punk rocker, are regarded worldly, rebellious, and pagan.

Perhaps this is because of their rigid legalism in regards to various issues that separate us from Oneness Pentecostals. Or maybe it's the fact that while Oneness Pentecostals follow the letter of the law in regards to verses such as 1 Cor. 11, they follow the spirit of the law in other cases, such as "greeting one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16). This seems like doublespeak, doesn't it?

Maybe their legalism is based upon the Oneness Pentecostals' belief that Trinitarians worship a freakish, pagan, three-headed God. Ironically, while doing so, they agree with pagans who believe that a woman's hair has spiritual power over one's enemies (Jasinski 4-12). In other words, if Trinitarians really worshipped a pagan God, as Oneness Pentecostals claim, wouldn't we be just as dogmatic about women having long hair as we are about worshipping "three persons"

in the Trinity, which allegedly is also pagan in its origin?

The obvious answer is we don't worship a pagan God, it is Oneness Pentecostals who do.

But in order for Jasinski to validate her claims, she quotes from pagan sources, including The Dictionary of Spiritualism; The Dictionary of Pagan Religions; The Hindu World: An Encyclopedia; Survey of Hinduism; The Donning International Encyclopedic Psychic Dictionary; Man, Myth and Magic; The Encyclopedia on Witches and Witchcraft; and The Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology.

In the eyes of Oneness Pentecostals, women with long hair have much more spiritual discernment than women with short hair. Should the reader doubt this, the following quotation is taken from the 1986 Symposium on Oneness Pentecostalism in which it was said: "Angels are also involved in the answering of prayer today. When the angels look upon a woman who has cut her hair, a woman whose hair is shorter than the Lord intended for her hair to be, they turn aside from her because they detect a spirit of rebellion there" (Leaman 334).

Another author states: "The angels are watching to see if she has this 'mark' (long hair)" (Bernard-Holiness 124).

Still another adds: "...the length of one's hair symbolizes and represents his relationship to God and to the immediate authority God has placed over him" (Seagraves 317).

In other words, in order for women of the UPCI to have their prayers answered, they must first line up in formation and be inspected by the angels. Only those who have not had a haircut can advance to the throne of God, and hope to have their prayers answered. Those who have had a haircut in any way fall, and must come back to try again.

Contrast this with 1 Samuel 16:7 which says: "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (NIV). While claiming to be Christian, Oneness Pentecostals looks at the outer man, or in this case, the outer woman, and castigates those who aren't well groomed, but, at the same time, do not appear too worldly.

As they become more and more dogmatic over the issue, the UPCI continues to turn out more and more books and booklets on this subject. The most recent books dealing with the length of a woman's hair are A Hair Short of Glory by Penny Watkins and My Hair, My Glory by Jill Jasinski.

The issue of whether or not woman should have long hair is so important, one writer within the UPCI stated:

A new thought has arisen out of churches which favor women cutting their hair.... This erroneous view is very alarming because it encourages people to believe and teach that the Bible is not really the word of God. That is dangerous! Oneness believers who accept this false idea usual-

ly end up sooner or later in trinity churches. (Switzer 332)

Maybe the reason they end up in "trinity" churches has nothing to do with the length of a women's hair, but the length of an endless list of commandments which Oneness Pentecostals must follow. In effect, they become exhausted trying to please men rather than God.

After all, if you have to follow all their commandments, what purpose does the Holy Spirit serve in trying to lead individuals closer to God by slowly working with him? But for Oneness Pentecostals, the Holy Spirit is emptied of His power by having to follow a list of man-made rules which never end.

But they can face some practical problems with this rule. What is the dilemma which Oneness Pentecostals must face when little Jimmy sticks chewing gum in little Jenny's hair? Are their parents going to go to hell if they cut the chewing gum out of little Jenny's hair? Does little Jenny have to repent once more and receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit before she can attend church? What about the woman who begins noticing a few gray hairs here and there, and wants to spend a few more years not having to face her age? Is she banished from all Oneness churches for removing these hairs? While we may laugh at such things, these question might send Oneness writers into a tizzy.

In having long hair, women also spend an enormous amount of time taking care of their hair. They con-

dition it, wash it, brush it, curl it, and otherwise maintain it. Does this distract her from other things?

Another one of the reasons women have long hair is that:

Men and women have distinctly physiologies in many ways. One of them is in the process of hair growth on the head. Hair develops in three stages – formation and growth, resting, and fallout. The male hormone testosterone speeds up the cycle so that men reach the third stage earlier than women. The female hormone estrogen causes the cycle to remain in stage one for a longer time, causing women's hair to grow longer than men's. Women are rarely bald because few even reach stage three. This physiology is reflected in most cultures of the world in the custom of women wearing longer hair than men. (MacArthur 262)

In what has become a growing epidemic, NBC Nightly News pointed out on its January 1998 broadcast that when women use anabolic steroids, which contain high levels of testosterone, it can lead to male pattern baldness. That's exactly what Dr. John MacArthur pointed out in the above quotation.

This leads me to ask, when Paul states "does not nature teach" that women should have long hair, is it a matter of biology rather than morality? Why not? After all, many have used Romans 1:27 to note that Paul was speaking about biology when he warns us that AIDS would result if homosexuals engaged in sodomy.

When Oneness Pentecostalism threatened to overtake the Assemblies of God from 1913-1916, the central focus was on baptism. After it was removed from the Assemblies in 1916, the spirit of division which caused it to split off from the Assemblies remained. Later, the issue became racism. Today, the central issue which divides all Oneness churches is legalism. As a result,

there are now over 100 Oneness denominations – and increasing.

The length of a woman's hair is very important to Oneness Pentecostals, and tied directly to her salvation. While the UPCI may not be the only Oneness denomination which teaches this, it is by far the largest.

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EXPLORING THE CULTIC DOCTRINE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS: TRUTH OR TROUBLE?

By Colleen Tinker

The 1996 book The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists by Dale Ratzlaff is beginning to make waves. In the two years since its first printing it has gone from being recommended by word-of-mouth to being mailed to pastors in entire conferences, paid for by anonymous donors.

Ratzlaff was a fourth-generation Adventist with an M.Div. from the Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University. He was an academy Bible teacher for seven years, and he pastored two Adventist churches. In 1982, convinced after extensive study that they could not document the doctrine of the investigative judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary from the Bible, Ratzlaff and his wife left the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Today Ratzlaff pastors the rapidly growing Christian Community Church in Arizona.

True Prophet or False?

Cultic Doctrine is a logical, carefully documented work with no overtones of resentment or bitterness. In it Ratzlaff explains his belief that the investigative judgment is not biblical. He further questions the validity of considering Ellen White to be a true prophet.

Ratzlaff lays his foundation by questioning, point-by-point, the

validity of William Miller's date setting. He points out that Ellen White had visions to support the erroneous dates for the second coming, had further visions to support new dates, and also had visions which declared that Jesus wanted people to believe the wrong dates for a time.

He also looks closely at the Adventist teaching of "progressive revelation."

"If I understand progressive revelation correctly, a new revelation of truth does not contradict the first revelation of truth. It may add new insights, facts and understanding, but the first revelation of truth fits into the bigger picture of truth without being contradictory." (page 355)

Judgment Linked to Major Beliefs

Another major point in Cultic Doctrine is that the investigative judgment is closely linked to the following key points of the Adventist message: the three angels' messages, the seventh-day Sabbath, the seal of God and the mark of the beast, the Adventist concept of the remnant, the health message, the imminent second coming of Christ, and the evangelistic mission of the Adventist church.

The doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment is indeed "the foundation and central pil-

lar of Adventism.' While some SDAs would not agree with this statement, we will see that nearly every aspect of their unique message is tied to this central pillar, without which the other SDA doctrines and emphases would lose some, if not much of their significance. (page 266)

"The glue that links all these SDA messages together is the prophetic ministry and visions of Ellen White," Ratzlaff says (page 274).

Ratzlaff does, however, admit that the Adventist church is not teaching the same things it taught many years ago. But he lays a challenge in front of the church:

The SDA church should not be evaluated today on the basis of what it was many years ago, but on its current beliefs and practices. And here is the Adventist opportunity and dilemma. It appears to me that there are many in the denomination who are changing and want more change. However, they do not want to openly repudiate past errors....

It seems to me the only way Adventists can really "come clean" and move into mainstream evangelicalism is to openly repudiate the early errors of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment and to drop the writings of Ellen White as a source of authority. (pages 354, 355)

Influence Spreading

During the past three months according to Ratzlaff, anonymous donors have paid to have the book mailed to every pastor in the Oregon Conference, in the Southeastern,

Southern, Central and Northern California conferences, and in the Rocky Mountain Conference. Recent phone calls, he reports, have promised money for more mailings.

On April 16, 1998, a general session meeting at the annual North Pacific Union workers' meeting dealt entirely with the questions raised by Ratzlaff's book.

Because of Cultic Doctrine's increasing exposure, "Adventist Today" presented four reactions to the book in a recent issue. Two are opposed to Ratzlaff's conclusions, and two support them. These are the personal views of people who feel passionately about their beliefs and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of "Adventist Today."

You may obtain The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists as well as Ratzlaff's first book, Sabbath in Crisis, by calling (800) 355-7073 or by ordering from the web site www.ratzlaf.com or dale@ratzlaf.com.

[R.A.S. also carries Ratzlaff's The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists. 384pp. SD-11. \$11.95 + p&h.]

BOOK REVIEW

Cults, New Religious Movements, and Your Family

By Richard Abanes

Reviewed by Ervin D. Ingebretson

As media attention is drawn to some cult activity (e.g., Heaven's Gate) there is usually extensive coverage. However, the media seldom, if ever, is qualified to judge the activity of Scriptural truth. Therefore, it is important to have an evaluation in the light of Scripture.

The author, Richard Abanes, presents an interesting and comprehensive analysis of each of the ten most threatening cults, in his mind, to family members. The ten are: New Age, World of Occult, Satanism, Scientology, Christian Identity, Nation of Islam, Moon's Moonies, Children of God, Mormonism, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The author opens each section with a vignette of one who has been drawn into the cult, experiences while there, and how the Gospel's transforming power led the person out.

He develops each cult analysis by giving a detailed history of the cult and its founder(s), analyzing the belief system of the group and scrutinizing each doctrinal statement in the categories of God, Christ, sin and salvation. Lastly, he describes the attraction of the cult that draws one into participation.

The primary purpose of the author, in addition to providing information about the cult, is to shine the light of Biblical truth on each group and to expose them as departures from orthodox belief and dangers to searchers. This he does in a remarkable literary manner.

[R.A.S. carries this book. 317pp. G1-57. \$14.95 + p&h.]

BOOK REVIEW

Weather and the Bible

By Donald B. DeYoung

Reviewed by Ronald Anderson

Professor DeYoung is a Christian physicist by profession who serves on the science faculty of Grace College in Indiana, and is editor of the "Creation Research Society Quarterly." He also serves as an adjunct professor at the Institute for Creation Research Graduate School of Science in San Diego. Among other books he has written are: Science and the Bible, and Astronomy and the Bible.

Dr. DeYoung's approach is pragmatic as he responds to 100 questions concerning weather in simple layman's terms which makes the book suitable for readers ranging from the young to the mature in age. Without forcing the issue, reference is made to scriptural passages which support the explanations of weather. The subject matter is covered under such general book sections as "Weather Basics," "Past Weather" and "Future Weather," etc.

Such questions as: "Where did the Genesis Flood waters come from?"; "What is ball lightning?"; "Is the earth warming?" are elucidated in simple terms.

As a condensed example, in response to the question "What was the vapor canopy?" DeYoung points out that this consisted of an invisible

vapor that surrounded the earth up until the time of the Genesis Flood. This canopy limited rain fall, increased the barometric pressure, and filtered out some harmful UV rays. Upon the collapse of the canopy during the Flood, it produced sustained lengthy deluges, whereas our Post Flood atmosphere is only capable of yielding two inches of rain as a world-wide average. The more moderate world preflood climate resulting from the canopy is evidenced by fossils of palms found in Alaska, fossils of crocodiles in New Jersey, and petrified wood in the deserts. The increased preflood barometric pressure as demonstrated in present day barometric surgery, while healing is seen to occur faster, would be responsible for improved health and longevity as indicated in Scripture in this same era. The subject is further discussed under the questions: "Was there rain before the Flood,;" and "Where did the Genesis Flood water come from?"

This book, broadly speaking, gives a strong argument for the presence of God's intelligent design throughout His creation.

[R.A.S. carries this book. 162pp. LEV-22. \$9.00 + p&h.]

BOOK REVIEW

Buddhism, Taoism and Other Far Eastern Religions

By J. Isamu Yamamoto

Reviewed by A. W. Chryst

This book really reveals how Satan works all over the world to draw people away from the true Gospel. Even in Buddhism there are so many groups that differ widely among themselves in their beliefs.

When a Christian dies, he goes to spend eternity with God in heaven. When a Buddhist dies all he has to look forward to (he thinks) is to be reborn and go through the same

problems of life again. The alternative is to attain Nirvana (Enlightenment) and annihilation of his body.

I believe it to be a good book in this area of the cults and false religions of our world.

[R.A.S. carries this book. 96pp. ER-12. \$5.95 + p&h.]

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