

# The Discerner

"Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"  
1 John 4:6

The Voice of the Religion Analysis Service

Volume 24, Number 3

July • August • September 2004

## AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL QUARTERLY EXPOSING UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

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Published Quarterly  
Price \$5.00 for 4 issues  
(After January 1, 2005 –  
\$10 for 4 issues)  
Foreign subscriptions extra

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## IN THIS ISSUE

*By Laurence J. Sutherland*

In Vol. 24; #2,(April - June 2004) Dr. Ron McRoberts gave us introductory thoughts on Dispensationalism .We have received numerous positive comments about this article. His second installment promises also a good resonance. Dr. McRoberts explains grammatical and hermeneutical components that are basic to our understanding of Dispensationalism.

The article on the papacy: “The Accomplishments of Pope John Paul II,” by the former Roman Catholic priest, Richard Bennett, should make evangelical Christians aware of the increasing influence and posture of Roman Catholicism.. Richard Bennett dares to unveil theological and ethical flaws in Roman Catholic thinking and practice. Has Rome really changed or have evangelicals accommodated over the last 25 years?

The book report on **New Neutralism II** provides us clarity over historic and current thinking in the area of evangelical alignments. Where do we find ourselves in this plethora of evangelical identities?

We are also including the promised additional data about my person. It is intended to help the reader to get to know me and my spiritual journey. All of us have “context” as exhibited in our family, vocational, and academic backgrounds. As you can readily extract from the data, my wife Shirley and I have been involved in missions for over 40

years. To be Biblically orthodox is very important, but obeying Christ in faithful service at all times and in all places has equal priority.

## OFFICE NOTES

*By Laurence J. Sutherland*

Recently RAS employed Mrs. Marli Gangi as our parttime Office Manager. We welcome Marli and we asked her to introduce herself to you. She writes: “Hi, to all fellow believers! The RAS Board members hired me, and I began work on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. As a former volunteer, I had a very good teacher, JoAnn BeVier. She helped me become familiar with many of the procedures here at RAS. I am thankful for her willingness to continue that help by phone whenever I have a question. The office is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, from 9:00AM-4:00PM. Hopefully, we will get some volunteers so we can increase our time open. Although I enjoy filling orders and sending catalogs, what I enjoy the most is helping you out with your questions, listening to your concerns and hearing the information you have to share. You are helping me to learn too! We have had some recent inquiries on Communism, the Illuminati, and New Age practices. Thank you for your gifts, orders and most of all prayers in support of this ministry.”

The employment of Marli is a real venture of faith for RAS. Your kind and thoughtful financial support is appreciated to cover this personnel cost. In view of this need, we are raising the subscription price for the **Discerner** to \$10.00 per year beginning January 1, 2005. We will, however, honor all present paid subscriptions that extend beyond January 1. Your comments on articles, book reviews, etc. are welcome and helpful. We want to serve you as best we can.

Correction: In our last edition, our RAS President was incorrectly introduced as Dr. “Roy” McRoberts. The correct listing should be Dr. Ron E. McRoberts.

## SELF-INTRODUCTION II

*By Laurence J. Sutherland*

In the previous edition (Vol. 24, No. 2 April-June 2004), I briefly introduced myself as the new editor of **The Discerner**. In a cursory way I tried to show how my appointment to this position evolved. I made no attempt to supply background as to my person. In the following few paragraphs I hope to fill this deficit with data about my family background, my spiritual journey, and my academic twists and turns.

**FAMILY** I was born in 1930 and reared on a farm near Grand Rapids, MN to parents who scratched a living from diversified farming. In those Depression days my father planted and harvested some good crops of potatoes and oats, but also did logging and dairying. Later my father worked in the iron ore mines on the nearby Iron Range. But it was always a struggle to meet expenses, pay the bills, and put food on the table. I was the third in a family of nine children - two girls and seven boys. I considered it a great privilege to go to the local schools where I avidly learned the 3R's and earned good grades.

**SPIRITUAL JOURNEY** My spiritual journey began at age 16. Up to this point our family lived very much like heathen. We did not go to church or Sunday School, had a small Bible in the house which nobody read, and systematically avoided any semblance of religion of any kind. Two events shattered this irreligious condition: 1) A man was accidentally killed on our tractor sawrig when he stepped backwards into the saw; and 2) My younger sister contracted polio. But God be thanked that our situation changed for the better within months.

On the heels of the events mentioned above, God sent a Christian lay leader into our community with the purpose of starting an afternoon Sunday School. He invited our family to join. The man was friendly, and we thought that a little religion wouldn't hurt us! Over the course of the next few months we came to believe and accept the story of redemption through Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross. I became

the first Christian in the family, and over the next few years all of us children and later our parents accepted Christ.

**M**ISSIONS With my conversion I immediately sensed God's calling to follow Him and serve Him completely and wholeheartedly. Upon graduation from high school, I enrolled at and attended for three years (1948-1951) the Oak Hills Christian Training School (now: Oak Hills Bible College) in Bemidji, MN. Here I learned about the desperate condition of a world without Christ, and I volunteered to go anywhere the Lord would send me. My practical training took the form of teaching Sunday School classes, preaching in churches, and working with boys in camps and church groups. Here, too, I met Shirley, and we married in January 1953. From 1951-1953 I pastored the Bethel Bible Church in Mentor, MN.

Both Shirley and I felt constrained to serve Christ in foreign missions. Further training would be necessary so I attended Seattle Pacific College from 1953-1958 and obtained both BA and MA degrees in Biblical Literature. Shirley received her RN during this same time. In 1958 we returned to MN to pastor the Mildred Bible Chapel in Backus. Our short stint of two years was decisive in propelling us to apply for foreign missionary service in Germany under the Greater Europe Mission. Following ordination in 1959 and extensive deputation, we sailed to West Germany in 1960 aboard the USS United States.

Following two years of intensive language study, I was asked to teach my first course "Introduction to Missions" at the German Bible Institute in Seeheim. Since 1961 I taught some 18 different courses over a period of 26 years (1961-1987). In 1971, at the request of the GBI faculty, I began a program of Bible Correspondence Study (Bibelfernunterricht) which eventuated into a full-blown correspondence school. Today the correspondence school is led by a German Free Church pastor and offers two dozen courses that have been approved by the German government due to their excellent academic and pedagogical quality.

During these years in Germany, our family grew to five children. Our oldest son Phil was born in the USA, but Tom, Charlotte, Kurt, and Nanette were all born in a German hospital. All of our children attended the local

German grade schools. The younger three transferred later to a Canadian school, the Black Forest Academy, for their high school studies. In 1986 we sensed God calling us back to the USA to take care of a difficult family problem.

From 1987-1996 the Greater Europe Mission assigned me to be a regional representative in the upper Midwest. I had the privilege to introduce thousands of people to the need of Europe, but also to assist several missionaries in getting their support and going to Europe. Spaced in between were personal trips to both Western and Eastern Europe to teach and support ministries. Upon retiring from GEM in 1996, I joined Emmanuel Ministries International with its program of Biblical education in Eastern Europe. Since 1994, I have taught regularly three times a year in Romania, Latvia, and Ukraine. My special interest has been the intercultural ministry in these countries, and my notes and lectures have been well disseminated in the respective languages. My next teaching tour takes place in Romania and Latvia in October and November of this year.

**A**CADEMIC PURSUITS I have always believed in “lifelong learning”. Over the last 25 years, I have worked on two doctorates - a PhD in Theology at the Tuebingen University in Germany and also a PhD in Educational Administration at the University of Minnesota. In both cases I did all of the course work except writing the dissertations. It seemed that my teaching ministry made a lengthy time for writing difficult. But the fruit of the studies does show itself, I believe, in teaching and encouragement ministries that the Lord has given me. It has been refreshing to study various languages along the way, too. I have formally, though superficially studied Russian, Romanian, Latin, Spanish, and Hebrew; my proficiency level is significantly higher in English, German, and Greek.

**E**T CETERA My side interests and hobbies include fishing (You ought to see my Romanian fishing pole!), coin-collecting, classical music, palavering about politics and theology, gardening (I love to watch those pumpkins grow!), bocce, chess, scrabble, and being with friends and family.

I hope that the above remarks will help you understand the vantage point of the new editor of **Discerner** a little better. Your “letters to the editor” are appreciated.

# A PRIMER ON CLASSIC DISPENSATIONALISM

## PART II: WHAT IS A DISPENSATION?

By Ronald E. McRoberts, PhD

This article is the second in a continuing series on classic Dispensationalism. The first article focused on the hermeneutics of Dispensationalism, examined the literal or plain approach to interpretation, and concluded with three dispensational distinctives: adherence to the literal hermeneutic, insistence on the distinction between Israel and the church, and acknowledgement that God's ultimate purpose is the manifestation of His glory.<sup>1</sup> This second article investigates the fundamental building block of classic dispensational theology, a dispensation. What does the word mean and where did it originate?

The English word, *dispensation*, is an anglicization of the Latin word, *dispensatio*, which was used by the translators of the Latin Vulgate Bible (ca. AD 382) for the Greek word *oikonomia* (οικονομία). The Greek word *oikonomia*, in turn, derives from two other Greek words: *oikos* (οικος), meaning *house*, and *nemo* (νεμο), meaning *to manage*. Thus, the primary Biblical concept underlying the English word, *dispensation*, relates to the management of a household.

Greek words, unlike English words, have feminine and masculine forms. The feminine form, *oikonomia*, refers to the arrangement of a household's affairs and appears nine times in the New Testament: Luke 16:2, 3, 4; I Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2,9; Colossians 1:25; and I Timothy 1:4. In these cases the New American Standard Bible (NASB) translators used the English words *management*, *stewardship* or *administration* to render the meaning. The masculine form, *oikonomos*, refers to the one who actually manages the household's affairs. This form occurs ten times in the New Testament: Luke 12:42; 16:1,3,8; Romans 16:23; I Corinthians 4:1,2; Galatians 4:2; Titus 1:7; and I Peter 4:10. With one exception the NASB translators used the English

words *manager* or *steward*; the exception is Romans 16:23 where they used *city treasurer*.

Jesus' parable of the unrighteous steward recorded in Luke 16:1-13 provides insight into the characteristics of stewardships that are relevant for an understanding of Biblical dispensations. Four salient points warrant noting. First, the stewardship involves two parties: one with the authority to arrange the affairs of the household, and another, the steward, with the responsibility for actually managing the household in compliance with the specified arrangement. Second and third, the steward is assigned specific responsibilities and is held accountable for satisfying them. Fourth, the one in authority may rearrange the household's affairs, particularly in response to failure by the steward to satisfy his responsibilities.

Additional insights may be gained by investigating how some of the giants of classic Dispensationalism have defined the word, *dispensation*. Lewis Sperry Chafer<sup>2</sup> defined a dispensation as "a stage in the progressive revelation of God constituting a distinctive stewardship of rule of life." John F. Walvoord<sup>3</sup> defined it as "a divinely-given stewardship based on a particular rule of life revealed in the progressive unfolding of divine truth in Scripture." Charles C. Ryrie<sup>4</sup> defined a dispensation as "a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God's purpose." The common features of these definitions all relate back to the Biblical concept of the management of a household. First, the household is the world; second, God is the authority who arranges the affairs of the household; third, man is the steward with responsibility for managing the household in compliance with the specified arrangement; and fourth, Biblical stewardships or dispensations lead progressively to the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose.

Although Ryrie does not incorporate the concept of progressive revelation into his definition of *dispensation* as do Chafer and Walvoord, he does acknowledge the close connection between the two concepts. He views the Bible as the revelation of God in successive stages (i.e., economies, stewardships, administrations, dispensations) that are distinguishable with respect to God's new revelation and man's new responsibilities. Ryrie notes that dispensationalists recognize both the unity of God's purpose and the diversity



in His progressive revelation of it. While some theological systems place so much emphasis on the unity that they are led to inconsistent interpretations, only dispensationalists simultaneously maintain the unity of His purpose, the diversity of the progressive revelation, and consistent interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

One other slight difference between Ryrie's definition and those of both Chafer and Walvoord is worth noting. While the latter two used the word *stewardship* to refer to God's arrangement of worldly affairs, Ryrie, whose definition came later, used the word *economy*. Crutchfield, noting that the English word *economy* derives directly from *oikonomia*, suggests Ryrie's use of *economy* adheres more closely to the Greek.<sup>6</sup>

Some attention must be given to the Greek word, *aion* (αιων), translated in English as *age*, which is allied with the concept of dispensation. In Matthew 28:20, Christ says, "... and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the age," and Matthew 12:32 reveals that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven "either in this age or the age to come." In both passages, the word *age* refers to a dispensation. However, extreme care must be taken not to equate the word *age*, when it refers to a time interval, with *dispensation*. Although a dispensation cannot be dissociated from the period of time in which it occurs, the primary concept underlying the word *dispensation* is that God has arranged worldly affairs and that man is the steward of that arrangement. Some of the confusion on this issue derives from an earlier definition by C.I. Scofield, another giant of classic Dispensationalism, who defined *dispensation* in terms of a period of time.<sup>7</sup> The later definitions of Chafer, Walvoord, and Ryrie more appropriately focus on God's arrangement of worldly affairs rather than on the time period in which the arrangement occurs.

Two non-Biblical analogies illustrate the relationship between dispensations and the arrangement of a household's affairs. First, note that the NASB translators used the English word *administration* to translate *oikonomia* in Ephesians 1:10; 3:9 and I Timothy 1:4. Focusing on the idea of a dispensation being an administration, American presidential administrations are analogous to dispensations. Every American president has assumed office with an agen-

da for arranging the affairs of the United States. Depending on the degree to which the new president's agenda departs from that of his predecessor and how successful he is in persuading Congress to pass enabling legislation, the country may find the new administration to be distinguishably different with respect to the arrangement of the nation's financial, social, and political affairs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal administration redefined the role of government by initiating a vast array of new government programs including Social Security and departed radically from the preceding administration of Herbert Hoover. However, just as the crucial feature of Roosevelt's administration was its different arrangement of the nation's affairs and not that it occurred between 1933 and 1945, the crucial feature of a Biblical dispensation is God's arrangement of worldly affairs and not the particular time period in which it occurred. Second, with Ryrie's definition of a dispensation as an economy in mind, different economic systems are also analogous to dispensations. One need only compare the arrangement of the economic affairs of the former Soviet Union under its socialist system to the arrangement of the same affairs of the United States under its capitalist system. Again, just as the crucial features that distinguish socialist and capitalist economic systems do not derive from the particular years in which they operate but rather from the distinguishably different ways they arrange national affairs, the distinguishable feature of a dispensation is the way God arranges worldly affairs and not the particular years of the arrangement. Although these analogies should not be pushed too far, they illustrate that the fundamental concept underlying the word *dispensation* is the arrangement of a household's affairs, whether that household is a nation or the world.

Biblical dispensations have three primary characteristics. As the etymology of the word, the definitions, and the analogies suggest, the first primary characteristic is a distinct arrangement by God of worldly affairs. Regardless of the name ascribed to this arrangement, it defines the relationship between God and man and the manner in which the world is to be managed. For example, the relationship between God and man was fundamentally altered after the Fall; it was altered again with the giving of the Mosaic Law; and it was altered again with Messiah's death, burial, and

resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The second primary characteristic of dispensations is that God's rearranging of worldly affairs changes man's stewardship responsibilities. In the Garden, man's stewardship responsibilities were to fellowship directly with God, tend the Garden, and abstain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Under the Mosaic Law, man's responsibilities were defined in terms of obedience to that Law. Following Messiah's first advent, the relationship established by the Law ended (Romans 6:14), and man's new stewardship responsibilities required a personal response to the offer of righteousness by placing faith in Messiah's finished work.

The third primary characteristic of dispensations is that God gave revelation to initiate the new arrangement of worldly affairs. The Mosaic Law was a new revelation by which God redefined His relationship to man and man's stewardship responsibilities. Later, the teachings of the book of Acts and the epistles revealed the Church as a body consisting of both Jews and Gentiles with a commission to spread the good news to the entire world.

In addition to these three primary characteristics, Crutchfield identifies three secondary characteristics of dispensations: test, failure, and judgment.<sup>8</sup> The secondary characteristics do not constitute prescribed distinctions among dispensations but rather seem to be simply part of their fabric. The test relates to the accountability of the steward as in the Luke 16 parable. Will man satisfy the responsibility God has assigned him in managing God's arrangement of worldly affairs? Would Adam and Eve abstain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Would those under the Mosaic Law be obedient to it? The second characteristic, failure, is simply the observation that man has consistently failed to satisfy his stewardship responsibilities. Finally, the failure of man to satisfactorily manage God's arrangement of worldly affairs has led to judgment. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden; God brought the flood in Noah's day; later Israel was sent into bondage and dispersed from the land.

In summary, dispensationalists view the world as a household which has its affairs arranged by God according

to His will and for the accomplishment of His ultimate purpose. These arrangements, administrations, economies, or dispensations are revealed by God in progressive stages, are distinguishable, and carry specific stewardship responsibilities for mankind. Man has repeatedly failed in these stewardship responsibilities and, as a result, has been the recipient of God's judgment. An understanding of God's dispensational arrangements of worldly affairs is essential to a proper interpretation of His revelation within and between dispensations.

Next: What are the Biblical dispensations? How many are there? Is everyone in agreement as to the number and identity of Biblical dispensations?

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# THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF JOHN PAUL II

*By Richard Bennett*

No other world figure has commanded the admiration he has enjoyed as the globe-trotting (over 1/2 million miles) Pope. His kindly smile and fatherly wave have made the 'Pope Mobile' a legend. Although they might disagree with his theology, both Catholics and Protestants have joined in the accolades of praise for this man. Billy Graham has extolled Pope John Paul, 'as the conscience of the whole Christian world.'<sup>1</sup>

Pope John Paul II wrapped up a grueling week of ceremonies Wednesday [Oct 22 nd 2003] to celebrate his 25th anniversary. A day after giving the 30 new members of the College of Cardinals their trademark scarlet hats, the 83-year-old pope presented the men with their cardinals' rings, which symbolize their link to the Church and the pope. The pope suffers from Parkinson's disease, which in the last few months has made it difficult for him to speak clearly. He is also unable to walk or stand, hobbled by hip and knee ailments and arthritis.<sup>2</sup>

The world is quite clearly being prepared for the death of the Pope. As the world gazes with fascination on this man and his endeavors, it is of paramount importance to know what the Pope believes, as his title and teachings have captivated the hearts of millions. In human terms of worldly success and acclaim it is hard to find an equal to John Paul II. During his twenty-five year reign as head of the Roman Catholic Church, he has traveled more, spoken more and published more than any of his predecessors.

"John Paul II has logged more than 1,126,541 kilometers from visits to 102 countries, which is like going around the earth close to 30 times. But perhaps the most lasting imprimatur he has left is his contribution to Christianity's growing list of saints. Vatican observers credit the Pope with being the single biggest influence in the collapse of Communism and the Berlin Wall. For instance his opposition to Poland's Communist regime early in his career showed

him as a man who was not just part of the crowd. In 1980 in his address to the United Nations General Assembly he had hoped that there would be 'No more war, war never again!'. In more recent times, in the wake of 9/11 he has appealed to the Christian world not to equate Islam with terrorism. The Pope has not only sought collaboration between various churches but also preached reconciliation between the religions of the world. Witness his gift for the grand gesture of kissing the soil of a country on arrival, visiting a mosque, inserting a scroll into a crevice of Jerusalem's Western Wall, embracing the handicapped. Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, who heads the Vatican office responsible for saints' causes, came somewhere close to assessing 25 years of John Paul II's pontificate, when he said early this month: 'I think this pope will deservedly pass into history as the pope of sainthood. The pope often recalls that sanctity is part of the Church's nature, it is in its DNA.'"<sup>3</sup>

But the question is this: Has sanctity of life been the consequence of the accomplishments of the Pope? Christ Jesus said, "sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."<sup>4</sup> Has there been this sanctity of which the Lord spoke? The mark of authentic sanctity is obvious in the Word itself, "if a man love me, he will keep my words. He that loved me not keepeth not my sayings."<sup>5</sup> The duty of those who claim to be Christ's followers is keeping His Word. Since the Pope in 1994 proclaimed to the world that his "certainty about all revealed truths was not derived from the Holy Scriptures alone, but that 'both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence,'" <sup>6</sup> he must be evaluated in line with the Lord's measure, for ". the scripture cannot be broken ." <sup>7</sup>

## **The faith and practice of John Paul II**

The Pope professes to work sanctity in the hearts and souls of men. He and his Church state publicly that baptism regenerates the soul of man.<sup>8</sup> By anointing with the oil of chrism, he claims that young people and adults are filled with the Holy Spirit by the sacrament of confirmation.<sup>9</sup> By the words "I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" uttered in the

confession box, the Pope purports to forgive sins.<sup>10</sup> Four words uttered at the altar during Mass, he believes, change the bread into the body of Christ.<sup>11</sup> The Pope then claims that power effectively flows from the element of Communion itself, “Holy Communion separates us from sin.”<sup>12</sup> This bread is also called the “Eucharist”, of which the Pope teaches, “the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins.”<sup>13</sup> These enticing words teach the age-old tradition of looking to a physical substance to obtain protection from sin. What makes the doctrine all the more repulsive is that this very teaching, which speaks of preserving from serious sin, is itself blasphemous. Such teachings as these come under the eternal curse of perverting the Gospel of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Christ Jesus’ words are spirit and life, “it is the Spirit that quickeneth.”<sup>15</sup> To propose an oral ingesting of Christ’s body in Communion is bad enough, however this is the very centerpiece of the teaching of John Paul II. It is the “Eucharistic face’ of Christ” of which he recently wrote, “By proclaiming the Year of the Rosary, I wish to put this, my twenty-fifth anniversary, under the aegis of the contemplation of Christ at the school of Mary. Consequently, I cannot let this Holy Thursday 2003 pass without halting before the ‘Eucharistic face’ of Christ and pointing out with new force to the Church the centrality of the Eucharist.”<sup>16</sup>

A big part of gala and pomp that is now capturing the world is this “Eucharistic face of Christ”. Those closest to the Eucharist are Catholic priests; they confect it in Mass and receive it each day. One would therefore think that they would by far surpass other people in sanctity of life. It is, however, the opposite. “Well-informed victims’ advocacy groups in the United States estimate there are between 2,000 and 4,000 abusive priests in America at this time, or a number between 4 percent and 8 percent of the 48,000 U.S. priests. If true, that would reflect an incidence of abuse alarmingly above that of the general population.”<sup>17</sup> The Savior gave the proper test of sanctity. Christ Jesus said, “ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”<sup>18</sup> Pretensions belong to man-made religion. Conduct is the fruit that determines the nature of the doctrines that have been taught. The Pope also teaches, “Priests have received from God a power that he has given neither to angels nor to archangels. God above confirms what priests do here below.”<sup>19</sup> The New Testament



established pastors and elders to lead the Lord's flock; the Pope, however, conveniently bridges over twenty centuries to join his sacrificial priests to Christ Himself.<sup>20</sup> It is of utmost importance therefore that the Pope's beliefs be understood, as they convey some of the greatest temptations that can be imposed on the souls of men and women.

### **Oldest, most alluring temptation**

The Pope's beliefs and teachings are in fact the oldest temptation known to man. Physical things, instead of symbolizing spiritual realities, are presented as bringing about sanctity and salvation. Looking to physical things to give spiritual life was a first lie of Satan. "in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." <sup>21</sup> Satan offered the fruit as the efficacious means of bestowing good upon Eve. She believed in the fruit's inherent efficacy to open the eyes and to give knowledge of good and evil. In the same way, the Pope and his Church present the seven physical sacraments as the inherent means of obtaining the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Pope and his Church teach, "The Church affirms that for believers the sacraments of the New Covenant are necessary for salvation. 'Sacramental grace' is the grace of the Holy Spirit, given by Christ and proper to each sacrament." <sup>22</sup> All of this sacramental power is cleverly intertwined with the political objectives. The Pope recently claimed for his Church, "a unique contribution to the building up of a Europe open to the world". In his document, *Ecclesia in Europa* (The Church in Europe) he states, ".the Catholic Church can offer a unique contribution to the building up of a Europe open to the world. The Catholic Church in fact provides a model of essential unity in a diversity of cultural expressions, a consciousness of membership in a universal community which is rooted in but not confined to local communities, and a sense of what unites beyond all that divides." <sup>23</sup> The pronouncement is a stunning ploy that purportedly proclaims the Christian message, while in fact it teaches the rites and rituals of the Papacy. For example, the concept of the "Gospel of hope" is mentioned forty times in the dissertation. The message, however, is not one of hope; rather it is an adept counterfeit. For example Paragraph 74 begins by stating, "A prominent place



needs to be given to the celebration of the sacraments, as actions of Christ and of the Church ordered to the worship of God, to the sanctification of people and to the building up of the ecclesial community.” The Pope continues to presents his physical symbolic sacraments as the efficacious cause of sanctity and salvation. In place of the direct obedience to Christ Jesus, as demanded in the Gospel of faith, the sacraments are purported to be “actions of Christ”. This is where the Vatican’s pretense of “hope” lies. Rome sets aside the direct grace of God in Christ Jesus through her sacraments and attempts to steal from Christ His priesthood, robbing Him of His power as Mediator. Through them she also attempts to rob God the Spirit of His peculiar work as the Sanctifier, attributing to her own sacraments His power of giving grace. From God the Father she attempts to take His prerogatives of justifying and forgiving sinners. The reality and power behind the concept of “Sacramental grace” is purported to be “the grace of the Holy Spirit.” This identification of “Sacramental grace” with the Holy Spirit of God is a formal and explicit sin against the Holy Spirit. This teaching is all the more to be condemned because it leads millions into fully relying on physical sacraments for salvation.

### **Pope’s creed satisfying to many**

The Gospel is never more dangerously attacked than when the counterfeit is concealed under the pretense of having divine power. However, people in general seem well pleased with the Pope and his message. Generally speaking, the world and those inside Catholicism love the Pope and his activities. People love a religion that has everything as it were “on tap”. In Catholicism there is something that corresponds to every class and liking, emphasizing adaptability to most tastes and receiving the support of men of diverse intellectual and moral temperament. To the person who likes rituals and pomp, here is everything to satisfy his heart’s content, sacramental rituals being acted out amidst candles, palms, charcoals, ashes, and the perfume of incense, by men in multicolored vestments. It has some of the finest architecture in the world and some of the most captivating music. To the politician or military man, it has all the grandeur of rank and hierarchy. For one seeking direct communication with God, it has a long tradition of mysticism.

To the ascetic, there are penances and sacrifices in monastic and convent life. For the Catholic charismatic, there is drama, signs and wonders. For those captivated by visions and apparitions, there is on hand a vast, worldwide assortment of Marian apparitions and messages. For those seeking the pleasures of life, there is the tradition of Carnival, yearly parish festivals with liquor, parish dances, and parish bingo. The Papacy is an organization fully adapted to man. It corresponds with the whole scope of his hopes, fears, desires, passions, quirks, and preferences. The world can find in the Papacy something that matches most tastes and affections.

In the Papacy, flagrant wealth and pomp join hands with poverty and pain. The Pope, in his palace, arrayed with crown, and surrounded with Cardinals and Archbishops decked out in scarlet and purple, welcomes the poor and suffering of the world, and all are impressed. Nothing seems too exalted for him, while at the same time, nothing is too low to be beneath his care and concern. The Pope's religion is the religion of man and the world loves to have it so. The honor and veneration paid to the Pope is great. The world wonders after him, they admire his power, and policy, and success. So great is the darkness, degeneracy, and madness of the world!

### **The clinching touch**

This Pope encourages mankind in its yearning to contact the dead. He publicly teaches, "Communion with the dead . In full consciousness of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the Church in its pilgrim members, from the earliest days of the Christian religion, has honored with great respect the memory of the dead...Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping 'them, but also of making their intercession for us effective.'" "We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world."<sup>24</sup> Supposed communion with the dead and deification of the dead has held a prominent place in nearly every system of paganism. The dead are consulted to give help to the living, which is the alluring charm of the occult. The practice of communicating with the spirits of the departed is sinful, since the Word of the Lord forbids it, "

there shall not be found among you any one...that useth divination.or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer, [one who calls up the dead].”<sup>25</sup> The Pope’s teachings on communion with the dead, in which he says, “our prayer for them is capable not only of helping ‘them, but also of making their intercession for us effective,” is quite similar to what one finds in the pages of the occult, “The dead love to celebrate, dance, and cavort with the living, and spirits love spirits, so we invite them with ritual libations...”<sup>26</sup> The Lord Christ Jesus commanded worship in prayer to God alone, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve .”<sup>27</sup> He gave the indispensable command that communication in worship is due to God alone and must not be given to any creature. “I am the LORD thy God.Thou shalt have no other gods before me .”<sup>28</sup>

It is not simply that the Pope recognizes and approves of “communion with the dead”, he has created more and more personages to be contacted, and recently with great speed. “Mother Teresa is just one miracle away from sainthood. No, that’s not hyperbole, just part of the fast-track canonization process that Pope John Paul II is pushing through the Vatican. Last Sunday crowds flooded St. Peter’s Square in Rome to witness the pope’s beatification of Mother Teresa, who died in 1997. Since most candidates are not even up for consideration until five years after their death, John Paul II is wasting no time. But this is not so surprising-if you consider John Paul II’s record over the past 25 years.”<sup>29</sup> “John Paul II has created more saints and beatified more people than all the popes put together. He has so far named 477 men and women as saints, and beatified 1,318 others, as it were, putting them into orbit for final elevation to the heavenly pantheon of Christian saints.”<sup>30</sup> The Pope continues his teaching regarding the dead by declaring that there is an interchange of holiness in expiation of sin, shared even with the dead in purgatory. He officially states, “In the communion of saints, ‘a perennial link of charity exists between the faithful who have already reached their heavenly home, those who are expiating their sins in purgatory and those who are still pilgrims on earth. Between them there is, too, an abundant exchange of all good things.’ In this wonderful exchange, the holiness of one profits others, well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others.”<sup>31</sup>

An abundant exchange of all good things in Scripture is in Christ alone, “ in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. “ <sup>32</sup> To assign Christ’s role to humans, including the dead ones, is a serious contradiction of God’s truth. God’s righteousness, which is credited to the believer at Christ’s expense, fills the believer again and again with awe, worship, and praise to the Holy God, Who Himself has provided the permanent finished work of justification for sin. To purport an imputation of righteousness outside of Him is preposterous in face of Biblical truth. Jesus Himself said, “ Truly truly, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. “ <sup>33</sup> The assertion of an exchange of merit between the believer and dead “saints” is egregious effrontery against the biblical truth that God alone justifies the sinner. The Pope’s pantheon of Saints is a collection of traps. In giving glory, honor, and communion in prayer, which is due to God alone, to the spirits of departed humans, the Pope flagrantly sins against the First Commandment. This prohibition includes a precept that is the foundation of the whole law, that we know the Lord is our God, acknowledge that He is God, accept Him and worship Him in prayer, and set our affections entirely upon Him alone.

### **Apocalyptic in character, adamant in law**

The figure of John Paul II is almost apocalyptic in grandeur. Underneath the facade, however, is an iron fisted hold on people in terms of law. Like Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), who resolved never to rest until he had subjected all authority and power, both spiritual and temporal, to the “chair of Peter”, so also the present Pope is determined to build such an empire, by both Church and civil law. <sup>34</sup> John Paul II has been adamant in his efforts to update the laws of the Roman Catholic Church. Since the days of Gregory VII, Popes have seen the necessity of making iron and inflexible church laws before attempting to control their subjects and others by compulsion, if necessary. In 1983, John Paul II’s revision of the 1917 Code of Canon Law added to the Roman Catholic laws, for example, “The Church has an innate and proper right to coerce offending members

of the Christian faithful by means of penal sanctions.”<sup>35</sup> Examination of these added laws shows them to be even more absolute and totalitarian than those of the past. In his law the Pope, in clearer terms than any cult, enunciates the necessity of suppressing one’s God given faculties, especially the mind and will. “A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff...”<sup>36</sup> The consequences of not submitting are also spelled out in his law, “The following are to be punished with a just penalty: 1. a person who teaches a doctrine condemned by the Roman Pontiff.”<sup>37</sup> Specific penalties are also decreed, “The law can establish other expiatory penalties which deprive a believer of some spiritual or temporal good and are consistent with the supernatural end of the Church.”<sup>38</sup> John Paul II knows right well how to enforce his will in law. In few things is his genius more conspicuous than in this. There are no checks and balances to his absolute power authority. In the official commentary on his Canon Law is the following, “The Church’s governmental system is vastly different from the notion of a balance of powers. In fact, the three functions are situated in the same office.... Unlike the American system, ecclesiastical law does not arise from the will of the governed, nor does the Church’s juridical structure rely on a system of checks and balances to maintain its effectiveness ...The Code promotes this system through a hierarchical structure that is more vertical than horizontal. Ultimately, the highest judge, the pope, is also the highest legislator and administrator ....”<sup>39</sup> An article in the Catholic World Report , “Rome Has Spoken æ Again”, shows how in practice the Pope imposes his will, “‘The Pope Moves to Stamp Out Liberal Debate on Heated Issues,’ headlined the New York Times in a front-page story, warning darkly of possible ‘just punishment’ for dissenters. In another front-page story, the Washington Post introduced its coverage with a headline reading, ‘Papal Letter is Divisive, Critics Say’, nor did the Post fail to add the obligatory sub-headline about how ‘Dissent on Dogma Risks Punishment....’”<sup>40</sup> John Paul II can appear to be eminently pious, and yet, when one studies his laws and their implementation, he is a prince in dictatorial power. Solemn warnings are given in the Word of God, “ for such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is

transformed into an angel of light .”<sup>41</sup>

## **A précis portrait of the Pope**

John Paul II, while purporting to be Christian, sits among God’s people speaking *ex cathedra* with a declared absolute authority, as his own teaching proclaims, “the Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority.”<sup>42</sup> . He has usurped the title and counterfeited the function of “The Holy Father”<sup>43</sup> , claiming to be “The Vicar of Christ”. He professes to impart Christ by Masses and the Holy Spirit by Sacraments. He claims to fortify the faithful with crucifixes, rosaries, statues, holy water and saints. He alleges that he can shorten the sufferings of souls in purgatory by indulgences. He professes to mediate between God and man; to hold the keys of heaven and hell; to forbid marriage to his priests, and to control lust and sexual scandals by the rule of celibacy. He has commanded to abstain from meats and has clothed his cardinals in purple and scarlet and fine linen with gold and precious stones. He claims the prerogative to judge all, but to be judged by none, “the First See is judged by no one.”<sup>44</sup> There is no appeal in any forum being possible against his laws, “there is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff.”<sup>45</sup> The list goes on and on. He has counterfeited and set aside all that is vital and valuable in Christianity. In a word, he has set up a system of unrighteousness and called it, “our holy mother, the Church”. He teaches that “ The Church is the mother of all believers. ‘No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as Mother.’”<sup>46</sup> His predominant presupposition is that the Lord set up a totalitarian hierarchy with himself on the top, followed by Cardinals, Patriarchs, major Archbishops, Archbishops, Metropolitans, coadjutor Archbishops, diocesan Bishops, coadjutor Bishops and Priests. The Biblical organizational structure of the bride of Christ is utterly different. In the true body of Christ, those ordained as elders and deacons are still only brothers within the same body and the one Master is Jesus Christ the Lord, “ for one is your master even Christ and ye are all brethren .”<sup>47</sup> As Catholics live their lives under his jurisdiction and teachings, they have a long journey through the Sacrifice of the Mass, sacraments, good works, merit, veneration of Mary and the Saints. Each

one is required to partake of the sacraments in order to be good enough to die in “sanctifying grace” and then to be saved, or at least, it is hoped, to land for a time in purgatory. Even on a natural level one wonders how a Catholic can have any hope. The sacrifice of the Mass and the sacraments are such that the most they can promise is a pseudo-hell called purgatory.

### **A decisive moment: where do you stand?**

The change in leadership in Rome is soon to occur, but her objectives and laws remain the same. It is time for those who really love the Lord and the truth of the Bible to show where they stand. One is commanded by the Lord not only to contend for the faith; but also to separate from those who have already compromised. His great commandment to give the Gospel is laid on those of us who call ourselves biblical Christians. To uphold His Gospel of truth based on His written Word is what is laid before us! The Lord Himself warned believers against “other christs”, Peter warned of “false teachers”, Paul warned of “wolves” within the flock. It is not simply that apostates existed in former days. As the Lord exposed the Pharisees for trying to establish their own righteousness, making the written word of no effect, so the true believers today ought to oppose the apostate system that officially gainsays the glorious truths of our God-and those who stand with them. The salvation of many is involved. The Lord faced the sincere and devout Pharisees with a very strong word. They were looking to their leader and chief, Caiaphas, the High Priest. The Lord said to those Pharisees, “if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins.”<sup>48</sup> Like the Pharisees, many present-day Catholics look to the Pope. And likewise, today as with the Pharisees, if anyone continues to recognize the Pope as “Holy Father,” he is in fact denying the true Father and the Son.”<sup>49</sup> He who persists in his sin will likewise die in his sins. The Lord Christ Jesus died in place of the true believer. His life and finished sacrifice alone are the ransom for the believer. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”<sup>50</sup> This was the price demanded by the All Holy God in order that His justice might be satisfied in the forgiveness of sins. As a result of this payment the true believer on Christ Jesus alone is



freed from sin and Satan. “ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord .” <sup>51</sup>

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# BOOK REVIEW

## New Neutralism II

By John E. Ashbrook

*Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson*

In 1958 the author's father, William E. Ashbrook, published his eight-page tract on new evangelicalism. The thesis was that new evangelicalism was a movement determined to take its stand halfway between fundamentalism and modernism. Hence the term neutralism. The author in *Neutralism II* writes a sequel to his father's *Neutralism I*. In it he describes the movement's progress in the forty plus years since the publication of his father's work.

Harold John Ockenga and Carl F.H. Henry were the pioneers of the new evangelical movement according to the author. They were severely critical of the fundamentalists for their lack of love. Harsh criticism from either side indicated the extreme difficulty for any reasonable neutralism. Neo-evangelicalism was launched by Dr. Ockenga which is described as he wrote the foreword to Dr. Harold Lindsell's book, "The Battle for the Bible", published in 1976. He called for a repudiation of Biblical separation, more social involvement, and an increased discourse in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the Gospel to the sociological, political and economic areas of life (p.5). Recapture of denominational leadership was another goal on the part of new evangelicalism. Dr. Ockenga called for re-examination of theological problems such as the antiquity of man, the flood, etc.

A further attempt for recognition of the movement was to impress the world with its intellect. Fuller Seminary was to be a "Cal Tech of the evangelical world" – that is, to be fully accepted by the world of academia.

The author has cited many popular religious persons and organizations as examples of this movement in our nation toward new evangelicalism. The basis for his assessment, is the author's definition of fundamentalism which is "the militant belief and proclamation of the basic doctrine of

Christianity leading to Scriptural separation from those who reject them” (p. 16). He holds up Billy Graham as the mouth-piece of new evangelicalism. He cites Graham’s Roman Catholic connection as evidence of his move from Biblical separation. The author has identified the National Association of Evangelicals and the World Evangelical Fellowship as examples of his charges because their participants hold varying theological positions. Therefore, strict Biblical fellowship is not possible. Fuller Seminary has engaged individuals who have differing theological beliefs and have implemented features of new evangelicalism.

Another group moving toward new evangelicalism he calls the Intellectuals in Residence. Examples of this group are Vernon Grounds, Ronald J. Sider, Roberta Hestenes, and a prominent name, John R. Stott.

The author chooses a select group to represent what he terms the Popularizers. These are excellent preachers, good theologians and pastors of large churches. They are charged with accepting invitations to speak where the request does not specify a Fundamentalist. Prominent names of this group are John MacArthur, Luis Palau, E.V. Hill, Charles Colson, Charles Swindell, Bill Hybels and Warren Wiersbe.

The author identifies Jerry Falwell as a “Gnu” evangelical. The Gnu has an identity crisis. Dr. Ashbrook applies this lack of identity to Jerry Falwell because he has aligned himself with Moral Majority and other issues that are part of the new evangelicalism (p.92).

Who will replace Billy Graham when that time comes? The author states that it is agreed that the institutions will set the course for the future and that course will be farther left.

If you have any concern about the welfare of Fundamentalism, Dr. Ashbrook will give you an assessment that is not very encouraging.

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### Growing People Through Small Groups

By David Stark and Betty Veldman Wieland

*Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson*

**T**he small Group dynamic has become an effective and popular ministry within local churches. The authors have determined that principle-based discussions are most helpful to accommodate the diversity of congregations. Small Groups can be a part of caring for the membership and reaching out to the community.

The definition the authors use for a small group is: “it is an intentional face-to face gathering varying in size and meeting regularly together to accomplish an agreed upon Christian purpose.”

The development of Small Groups must be rooted in God’s will. The Group must be God-centered and people related. This is God’s work being done, not ours.

Small Groups are all about people because the crown of God’s creation is people. This dynamic plays such an important part in how Christ builds His Church. We are building people instead of programs. The foundation of any successful Small Group ministry is God.

It is important to know why people want to be involved in Small Groups. The authors list the following reasons: relationship-building, felt needs, affinity, passions, spiritual hunger and service-oriented tasks.

The authors use two chapters in dealing with the various stages of spiritual development. They use the parable of the sower of Matthew 13 to illustrate the heart soil of the participants. God develops people spiritually in increments and the parable illustrates the stages people go through on their faith journey. It is important to meet people just where they are, and the Small Group participation will enable people to grow socially and spiritually. People develop in stages.

Growth is a very important goal of the Small Group ministry. The authors recommend that who is blooming in a Small

Group must be enabled to grow and what is growing should be nurtured for further growth. As the Group matures transplanting will be needed for room to grow.

The leader of a Group does not function as a controller but as a facilitator of the Group. The authors use the analogy of “the gardener” in describing the role of the leader.

The process of growing is God’s work. He is the author and orchestrator of how people grow. Prayer and the Word are links to God.

The leader is a vision-caster, an interpreter of the community, the provider of training, a problem solver or the ambassador of the group. He/she is a living example for the Group. The leader monitors the health and progress of the Group. Many times a lay person can be a better shepherd for the Group than a Pastor.

The authors list four kinds of Groups. They are: Being, Caring, Learning, and Working. In devising a plan for the function of the Group a ‘one size fits all’ plan should not be used. Each Small Group is made up of a variety of personalities, each reacting differently. Each has different needs and not the same growing rate.

The authors provide a number of questions at the close of each chapter which help to provide thought and discussion material for the content of the chapter.

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