

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 4

October • November • December 2004

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL QUARTERLY EXPOSING UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

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FROM THE EDITOR

By Laurence J. Sutherland

Recently I taught students in Bible Schools in Romania and Latvia. In Romania I instructed eight students on “Confronting the Cults”. The students informed me about the inroads of the Mormons into their community life. Frankly, I had to apologize as an American that this strange but emboldened cult seeks to promote its weird and very pernicious doctrines even in Eastern Europe. In Latvia I listened carefully everyday to the BBC. The commentators were trying to analyze and explain why George W. Bush won the USA presidency for a second term. They admitted that Europe with its postmodernism and flagrant secular humanism finds it extremely difficult to understand the so-called “value issues” in the election. The political pundits of Western Europe had hoped that John Kerry would be the clear winner. President Jacques Chirac of France characterized Bush as a “a religious mystic”.

As evangelicals, we aggressively advocate “truth, humility, and righteousness” (Psalm 45:4) as “value factors” of biblical Christianity. With the banner of “truth, humility, and righteousness” over us we confront the deception and powerlessness of secular humanism, be it here in the USA or in Europe.

WITH THIS ISSUE

By Laurence J. Sutherland

This final edition of 2004 contains articles of solid theological import but also practical articles that bring the battle “down to earth” where we live. Both Dr. Ron McRoberts and Dr. David Larsen deal with the subject of Dispensationalism. This theological theme doesn’t go away. The Abrahamic Covenant, Romans: Chapters 9-11, and the existence of modern Israel simply do not allow us to ascribe the promises to historic Israel to the Church. Again, we are thankful that Dr. McRoberts continues his series with the third installment on Classical Dispensationalism; Dr. Larsen, professor emeritus of Trinity Theological Seminary, complements McRoberts’ viewpoint with his own apt and insightful perspectives on Supersessionism, or Replacement Theology.

The last two articles document the growth of the cults around us and challenge us to confront them. I have known and appreciated the work of Rev. John Mayer relating to home missions in the Twin Cities for several years. There is no one in the Twin Cities area that has done more research than Mayer about the growth of religions and cults in this metropolitan area of three million people. His valuable information ought to quicken us to action, whether we live in Minnesota or Mobile, Alabama. Most of us live among diverse populations with different religious viewpoints. We all have our own mission fields - right before our doorsteps! Dr. Roy Knuteson, a regular contributor to the Discerner, submits a supporting article that presents both the human and divine perspectives as we confront the cults. We do well to keep these perspectives fresh and clear in mind.

Have you heard about the Two by Twos? Kathleen Lewis in her book “The Church Without a Name” attempts to expose this enigmatic group. Rev. Erv Ingebretson reviews Lewis’ book. He mentioned to me that he found the book difficult to read and evaluate due to the puzzling nature and doctrine of the Two by Two movement. Perhaps we would like to read this book ourselves. It is available from RAS for \$12.00 for one copy and \$20.00 for two copies plus \$1.75 postage and handling.

A PRIMER ON CLASSIC DISPENSATIONALISM

PART III: WHAT ARE THE DISPENSATIONS?

By Ronald E. McRoberts, PhD

Parts I¹ and II² of this series focused on the distinctives of dispensationalism and on the concept of dispensation. A dispensation is a distinguishable arrangement by God of earthly affairs that defines His relationship with man. Three distinctives characterize dispensationalism: the literal hermeneutic, the distinction between Israel and the church, and God's ultimate purpose being the manifestation of His glory. Part III focuses on identifying and naming the dispensations. The primary criterion that distinguishes dispensations is the establishment by God of a fundamentally different arrangement of earthly affairs that redefines His relationship with man. Some dispensations are easy to distinguish; others are less easy, primarily because the Biblical record has less to say about them. The discussion that follows proceeds in order of ease of distinguishing dispensations rather than in chronological order.

All Bible students agree that God fundamentally altered His relationship with man following Messiah's first advent. Prior to Messiah coming, God had promised blessings to the nation Israel conditional on obedience to the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Law that covered all aspects of their lives. After Messiah came, the relationship has been based on all men, not just Israel, individually accepting the gift of righteousness that Messiah's death and resurrection made available. Most Bible students acknowledge at least these two dispensations, although they may not use the term dispensation. The various names that have been proposed for dispensations typically characterize one of their primary features. Thus, the former of these first two dispensations is usually named the Mosaic Law dispensation or the dispensation of Law, while the latter is frequently named the dispensation of Grace. Although Scofield used the name Church

dispensation³, Grace is a more appropriate because the Church will not be present during the entire dispensation (see the discussion below on the Tribulation).

The term *premillennial* characterizes those who believe that in the future Messiah will return to earth, establish a literal kingdom, and reign as sovereign for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-6). The term derives from the definition of a millennium as 1,000 years and the understanding that Messiah's earthly kingdom is yet future. For those holding a premillennial view, which includes dispensationalists, this kingdom is a distinguishably different arrangement of earthly affairs, one in which the relationship between God and man will be based on the personal rule of Messiah and His laws. This dispensation, during which Messiah reigns from an earthly throne, is aptly named the Millennial Kingdom.

As discussed in Part I of this series, a distinctive of dispensationalists is that they adhere to the literal hermeneutic; i.e., they interpret the Scriptures literally unless there is clear evidence that the original hearers of the message understood or were intended to understand revelation in a different manner. Thus, dispensationalists accept as factual the Biblical account of creation, the Garden of Eden, and the sin of Adam and Eve. In this context, the relationship between God and man was fundamentally different before and after Adam's and Eve's disobedience. Before their sin, they enjoyed a face-to-face fellowship with God; after their sin, their relationship with God was based on obedience to the dictates of their consciences. Although some dispensationalists do not regard God's arrangement of earthly affairs in the Garden as a separate dispensation, all the primary and secondary characteristics of dispensations were satisfied. There was revelation to define the arrangement; there was a responsibility, tending the Garden; there was a test of obedience, prohibition from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; there was failure; and there was punishment which included banishment from the Garden and all the attendant consequences. Scofield named this dispensation Innocence⁴. However, both Ryrie⁵ and Crutchfield⁶ note that Adam was created with more than innocence; he was created with a holiness that permitted him to have a face-to-face relationship with God. Ryrie further notes that Adam's innocence was unconfirmed in the sense that it had yet to with-

stand a test. Thus, while the name Innocence is not inappropriate, it does not completely characterize Adam's moral state. Ryrie suggests the name Unconfirmed Creature Holiness, but acknowledges that the name is awkward. Nevin⁷ suggested the name Freedom which Ryrie states better characterizes Adam's state. For the sake of dispensational tradition, however, this series uses the name Innocence.

The conscience-based relationship between God and man following Adam's banishment from the Garden was fundamentally different than the relationship based on the Mosaic Law. Immediately following the Fall, the relationship was based on obedience to the dictates of conscience, while under the Mosaic Law it was based on obedience to the Law. Immediately following the Fall, all men had a direct relationship with God, while under the Mosaic Law, only the nation Israel had a direct relationship with God. The task, then, becomes one of identifying God's distinguishable arrangements between the Fall and the giving of the Mosaic Law.

When God called Abraham, His arrangement of earthly affairs and His relationship with man changed. With Abraham's call, God singled out a man, his family, and the nation of his descendants to represent mankind in a new relationship. The initiation of this new relationship marked the beginning of a new dispensation. The only question is whether the entire interval from Abraham to Messiah should be considered a single dispensation because of God's exclusive relationship with Israel or whether the Mosaic Law separated this interval into two dispensations. In Galatians 3, Paul gives the answer. Both before and after the Law, righteousness was and continues to be based on faith, the faith of Abraham that God counted as righteousness. However, with the Mosaic Law, which was not of faith and which could not provide righteousness, God added a dimension to His arrangement of earthly affairs that was sufficiently new and different that a decision in favor of a new dispensation is warranted. The later of these two dispensations has already been named Mosaic Law. However, a name for the dispensation beginning with Abraham and ending with the giving of the Mosaic Law must yet be selected. Scofield named this dispensation, Promise, perhaps on the basis of the revelation God gave Abraham⁸. Patriarchal Rule, another frequent choice, is better because it describes the nature of the rela-

tionship between God and man.

Consideration must also be given to whether a new dispensation was inaugurated with Noah. Based on the primary and secondary characteristics of dispensations, a decision in favor of a new dispensation is justified. The Flood is the judgment ending the previous dispensation; God provided new revelation to institute capital punishment which, in turn, presupposed a human, civil government to dispense the punishment; and man's test of obedience was to govern in accordance with divinely revealed principles. However, the new institution of civil government was in addition to, not in lieu of, conscience as the basis for God's relationship with man. The name Human or Civil Government has been widely accepted as appropriate for this dispensation.

At this point, seven dispensations have been identified; in chronological order: Innocence, Conscience, Civil Government, Patriarchal Rule, Mosaic Law, Grace, and Millennial Kingdom. Are there others? The discussion now focuses on a few remaining questions: (1) Was a new dispensation inaugurated with the establishment of the kingdom in Israel? (2) Is the Eternal State, which follows the Millennial Kingdom, a dispensation? (3) Will the Tribulation be a new dispensation, or perhaps a reversion to the Mosaic Law dispensation?

The question of whether establishment of a kingdom in Israel inaugurated a new dispensation can be dismissed rather quickly. Although Israel asked for a king like all the other nations, that is not exactly what God provided. Israel's king took on the trappings of a king like the other nations, but the underlying earthly arrangement defining the relationship between God and Israel remained unchanged. McClain's superb treatise, [The Greatness of the Kingdom](#)⁹, traces the concept of a mediator between God and man to its inception with Moses. His argument that the mediatorial relationship had been established long before Saul and that it only changed its external appearance with the establishment of a kingdom in Israel is persuasive. Therefore, there is no justification for considering the establishment of the kingdom in Israel as the beginning of a new dispensation.

Regarding the Eternal State, Ryrie argues that dispensations are tied to God's arrangement of earthly affairs during

temporal history¹⁰. When earthly affairs and temporal history end, there will be no need for dispensations. Therefore, the Eternal State is not regarded as a dispensation.

The question of how to regard the Tribulation is somewhat more involved. The Tribulation is the 7-year period of judgment upon the nations of the earth that follows the dispensation of Grace and ends with Messiah's return (Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24:9, 22; Rev. 12:17). Chafer suggested that the Tribulation will constitute a revival of the Mosaic Law dispensation.¹¹ Certainly some features of this time harken back to the Mosaic Law. First, the Sabbath and temple worship will be re-instituted. Second, the Tribulation is the 70th of Daniel's 70 weeks of which the first 69 were part of the Mosaic Law dispensation (Dan. 9: 24-27). Third, many believers understand that the Church, a primary feature of the dispensation of Grace, will be translated from the earth directly into Messiah's presence (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1) at the beginning or in the middle of the Tribulation. The issue is whether a dispensation can be considered unchanged if one of its primary features is absent. However, it is not God who re-institutes the Sabbath and temple worship but unbelievers. In addition, salvation will still be based on grace made possible by Messiah's sacrifice, and there is no indication that the efficacy of that sacrifice will be mitigated. Therefore, it is appropriate to regard the Tribulation as the judgment that ends the dispensation of Grace.

In summary, for this series, there are seven dispensations: Innocence, Conscience, Civil Government, Patriarchal Rule, Mosaic Law, Grace, and Millennial Kingdom. However, what is most crucial is not the particular number of dispensations or their particular names, but that God instituted different arrangements of earthly affairs, that those arrangements defined His relationship with man, and that care must be exercised that features of different dispensations are not incorrectly mixed.

Next: The following parts in this series will focus on in-depth analyses of the individual dispensations with respect to their primary and secondary characteristics. The discussions will identify features of dispensations that end and those that carry forward into subsequent dispensations. Such features include law, sacrifice, grace, conscience, government, covenants, and fulfillment of promises.

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THE HERESY OF SUPERSESSIONISM

THE FALSE TEACHING OF REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

*By David L. Larsen, Professor Emeritus of Preaching
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School*

*"I ask then, did God reject his people? by no means!"
—Romans 11:1*

Supersessionism or Replacement Theology is the view that God is finished with geo-political Israel. Israel has been cast finally on the slag heap of history. Now replacing Israel is the Church. Although the curses and judgments in the Old Testament have been literally fulfilled in the castigation of Israel, the blessings promised in the Old Testament are transferred to the Church. Normal historical-grammatical interpretation of the Scripture is precipitously abandoned and the notorious and reprehensible Alexandrian or spiritualizing interpretation takes its place with no regard for the original author's intention whatever. The fact that every use of "Israel" in the New Testament is clearly ethnic Israel does not matter. The fact that Supersessionism has been the seedbed of vicious anti-semitism across the centuries is of no moment.

If the unconditional promises of God to Israel of land, seed and blessing can be abrogated and transferred to the Church, do we not have a problem with respect to the fidelity and character of God? Can we who comprise the "Church is Christ's body" be so sure we can count on the promises of God to us? Will our defectiveness and shortcomings invalidate God's promises to us? Even Augustine, the father of amillennialism, saw something for ethnic Israel at the end of the age.

Many of the Reformers did not, although most of the Puritans and the Pietists of Central Europe did see the return of the Jews to the Holy Land at the end of the age and the ultimate conversion of "all Israel" (Romans 11:26). Many writers for *Christianity Today* and naturally the

Christian Century support the teaching that there is no future for ethnic Israel. D. James Kennedy's school in Florida, Knox Theological Seminary, has issued a statement denying any future for Israel and any significance in the present existence of the state of Israel. Dr. John Piper, widely heard Minneapolis pastor, has likewise handed it down to his devotees that Israel is done. The return of the Jews to Israel means nothing.

A very serious challenge to the general evangelical view that God has something very special for Israel has come in the new book by Dr. Timothy Webber, formerly of Northern Baptist Seminary in the Chicago area and now President of the Free Will Baptist Seminary in Memphis. The book is entitled, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Baker, 2004). This study is a scathing attack on dispensationalism, but Webber totally ignores the fact that dispensationalists are joined in their love and support of Israel by many who would be called classical pre-millennialists and even some amillennialists (such as D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones) and some post-millennialists who have taught that Romans 11 refers to ethnic Israel (such as Charles Hodge of Princeton). He makes it sound like only J. N. Darby and his followers believe that "the nation Israel will play a central role in the unfolding of end-time events". (page 9). Cf. my, "The Company of Hope: A History of Bible Prophecy in the Church" (Bloomington, IN: 1st Books, 2004).

Webber admits that the preponderance of early Christians were premillennialists, but he would put "Christian Zionists" into the cultic camp with the likes of David Koresh, et al. He too easily characterizes dispensationalists as users of the evil Protocols of the Elders of Zion—a few extremists possibly but not the movement as a whole. Scripture is clear that there will be many Jewish casualties in the "time of Jacob's Trouble" and this he impugns as insincere love for Israel, but he ignores the fact that there will be heavy casualties among the Gentiles also (Rev. 8:6ff). But Webber does not seem concerned about what Scripture teaches, but mainly that dispensationalists are apparently chiefly involved "in the New Christian Right" (page 17) against abortion and mainstreaming the gay agenda.

How foolish to think that because of "the great parenthesis" (the Church Age), the Church "has no prophecies of its

own” (not 1Thess. 4:13-18?). Though most rigorously delineated by Darby, the two-stage rapture can be seen by such as Efreem the Syrian (7th century), Phillip Spener, Increase Mather, Morgan Edwards, etc. John Wesley was a committed premillennarian as several learned studies show (of which Webber seems unaware).

He correctly sees pre-tribulationism as key in battling against higher criticism, Darwinian naturalism and modernism, and also concedes that the evangelists all seemed to hold the dispensational perspective (including Moody, Sunday and Billy Graham). Urgency in evangelism has been the correlate of the imminent return of the Savior. Though the lovers of Zion have led the way in Jewish evangelism, it is not clear that Webber believes that Jews need Jesus. He constantly disparages dispensationalists as passive observers and not active shapers (page 68). Not true. He alleges that dispensationalists see the spread of democracy as a sign of the end (page 83), failing to understand that the separation of powers is the safest thing for sinners, albeit an absolute monarchy with Jesus as King is the best form of governance (the feet of mixed iron and clay in Daniel 2).

Clearly Webber has not studied what dispensationalists teach about the conversion of the 144,000 at the mid-point of the tribulation, since they will be evangelists and witnesses during the last half (cf. Mt 24:14). We do not see the Cross as an abrupt change in plans with Israel’s rejection of the theocratic kingdom (cf. Rev. 13:8). He mistakenly asserts that Ultra-Orthodox Jews oppose Israel, but this should be “some Ultra-Orthodox.” Distressing inaccuracies!

Nor have Christian Zionists felt Israel could do no wrong—any more than our own beloved country can do no wrong. Unfair sweeping generalizations! It is far too soon to dismiss Russia’s role (Ez.38-39). Israel’s founding and development may have been “messy” (page 156), but how about our own? Shall we discuss such expansionist wars as the Mexican-American and Spanish-American? Should we be forced to return those lands to those we defeated?

Are the promises of God to His ancient people no part of the discussion as to whose is the land? The full land for Israel as promised in Scripture and as depicted on the exterior of the Knesset in Jerusalem will not be Israel’s before the

Millennium. What Webber will not face is that 250 million Arabs are part of the over one billion Muslims in this world who are fanatically dedicated to destroy Israel and annihilate the Jews. Such sentiments were once thought evil and wrong when voiced by Adolph Hitler. What has changed? Though newly published, Webber does not have Jerry Falwell in the Southern Baptist Convention (page 200).

Lovers of Zion are divided over literal Babylon or spiritual Babylon (both kinds of usage are found in Revelation, cf. 11:8). The original consulting committee of the Scofield Bible was divided right down the middle of this issue. One wishes that Dr. Webber in his diatribal expose of dispensational lovers of Zion would at least once face the following facts: The Apostle Paul wanted Israel to be saved; he saw the coming of wrath on them; and he foresaw their ultimate salvation.

Much of the liberal establishment has adamantly opposed even the founding of the state of Israel. Radical Islam is the main problem for “Palestinian Christians,” most of whom are Greek Orthodox, whose hierarchy in Greece champions the persecution of Greek Christians.

Webber does not interact with the official Muslim line that there never was a Jewish Temple on the “temple mount” (or the fact that most in the Arab world believe that Jews are responsible for the Twin Towers tragedy of 9/11). Most of the new scholarship in Israel sees the New Temple as built on the mount in the more empty northern half of the mount and not impinging on the Dome of the Rock (a solution the Anti-Christ might well force upon both sides as part of his consolidation of power upon his accession as world ruler).

“The Christian foreigner” who in 1969 tried to burn down the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the mount was in fact an “Armstrongite” from Australia, but Webber would have us believe he is a “Christian Zionist.” Not true. Webber implies that in our tours we prefer Israeli generals, but in my trips to Israel I have used both Israeli guides and “Palestinian Christian” guides. Each has a different slant. These glaring errors are indeed troubling. We do “pray for the peace of Jerusalem,” although we surely recognize what will be the ultimate shape of things to come.

Webber’s book epitomizes a growing wave among evangel-

icals in an increasingly shrill supersessionist chorus. A leading Jewish scholar is even quoted in the liberal *Christian Century* to the effect that God's election of Israel is based solely on His love and is unconditional (July 27, 2004; 22). His argument is that by claiming to supersede Israel, "the Church directly assaults the trustworthiness of God's promise to Israel and the world" (page 27). A Jewish convert to Catholicism has recently written a best-selling book, "Salvation is from the Jews" (Ignatius, 2003) in which he maintains that Jews and the Jewish state must persist in history because they are so integrally a part of the Second Coming of Christ (page 251) and that, therefore, Israel is the guarantee of the "parousia" (the Second Coming of Christ). He blasts Supersessionism and the "two covenant" idea (one for the Jews and one for the Church). God wants the Jews to come to Him, and they will – and they will play a critical role in the final movement of history. One might wish that our dear Timothy Webber and his friends would at least interact with the real issues raised in Scripture which undercut Supersessionism.

DISCOVERING THE NEW TWIN CITIES; A LOOK AT THE TWIN CITIES SPIRITUAL CLIMATE

*By John A. Mayer, Executive Director,
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“We aren’t in Kansas anymore.” was the line uttered by Dorothy after she landed in the Land of Oz in the 1939 movie classic *The Wizard of Oz*. Looking around at my own city of 3 million people in 2004 with all the dramatic changes taking place, this line could be slightly altered and then uttered about my own city: “We aren’t in Minneapolis/St. Paul anymore.” The Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul have been transformed from a typical Midwest town into a large urban metropolis. Over the past few decades the face of my city has experienced major changes, both religiously and ethnically. The demographics and religious census of our once mostly Scandinavian and German makeup are now very multi-cultural and diverse in many ways. Let’s take a look at some of these changes as we “Discover the New Twin Cities.”

IMMIGRANTS/REFUGEES

In a city where lutefisk and lefse were once all the rage, the food trends now include eating goat, camel, and yak by hundreds of thousands of people living in the Twin Cities area. How did this happen? Starting in the mid-1980s, the Twin Cities began to see a trickle of refugees and immigrants resettling here. The trickle has now become a flood.

- During the 1990s decade, the Twin Cities was the 9th fastest growing Asian city in America.
- During the 1990s the Twin Cities was the 8th fastest growing Hispanic city in the U.S.
- The decade of the 1990s saw the Twin Cities metro area as the number one city in the U.S. for Sub-Saharan African Immigrants.

- In 2002, the Brookings Institute declared the Twin Cities one of the top 10 Gateway Cities in the U.S. for new refugees and immigrants.
- The Phillips neighborhood just south of Downtown Minneapolis is now the most diverse single neighborhood in all of America with over 100 different languages spoken there.
- The Twin Cities is home to the largest concentrations of Hmong, Somali, and Oromo people and the second largest concentrations for Liberians and Tibetans.
- 515,000 first and second generation immigrants speaking 150 different languages now make their home in the Twin Cities.

Not surprisingly, the Minneapolis/St. Paul area is home to five refugee resettlement agencies. These ethnic changes have forever changed the city I call home. Ten years ago, Nicollet Ave. in Minneapolis was boarded up and abandoned. Not anymore. Now it's the new trendy "Eat Street" with 75 ethnic restaurants located on just a six-block stretch. The neighborhood has been totally revitalized by Minnesota's newest citizens as the "Eat Street" banners flying on the street surely declare. A few blocks away in a drive down Eastlake Street in Minneapolis will also indicate the dramatic changes taking place with 400 Hispanic and 200 Somali businesses located there. The new light rail system that opened in our city earlier this year that travels from the "Mall of America" to the airport to downtown Minneapolis sells tickets in four languages (luckily one of them is English). The same city of Minneapolis had a Somali man run for Mayor in 2001. The Twin Cities has the largest mall in the U.S.-"the Mall of America" and is also home to the very first mall in history-"Southdale". But now the Twin Cities is also home to seven Hispanic malls, six Somali malls, Hmong, and Laotian malls. If you wish to take a cab to any of these malls including the Mall of America, your cab driver will most likely be a Somali man as over 500 Somalis work as cabbies in our city. Another change is taking place in the public schools. Go visit Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis where former Governor of Minnesota, Jesse Ventura, once attended, now almost half the student body is composed of students from

the country of Somalia. Go over and visit St. Paul for the 10th largest Cinco de Mayo festival in the country. My own family has become part of this trend as my wife of seven years is an immigrant from Indonesia. The trickle has become a flood indeed.

WORLD RELIGIONS

Not surprisingly, the majority of these new Twin Cities residents are not Christian. They have come from every country on the planet and most of them are not Christian. In fact, of the 515,000 total, only 9% attend church regularly. That means that 91% of over a half a million people living in my own city are totally unreached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If they aren't Christian, then what exactly do they believe? The Twin Cities now has:

- 110,000 Muslims meeting in 67 mosques (one mosque is even in a former church building).
- 56,000 Buddhists meeting in 55 Buddhist temples. The Dalai Lama himself visited the Twin Cities in 2001.
- 52,000 Jews meeting in 43 synagogues. The newest Jews are Russian Jews.
- 22,000 Hindus meeting in 22 Hindu temples (one temple also is in a former church building and a new Hindu temple with seating for 500 people is going up next year on 80 acres of land in the suburb of Maple Grove).
- 1,000 Sikhs meeting in 2 temples.
- 200 Jains meeting in 2 temples (one temple is in a former church building).
- 75 Zoroastrians meeting in 1 group.
- Thousands of Shintoists, Confucianists, and Animists

CULT/OCCULT GROUPS

The religious landscape of the Twin Cities has also changed in other ways recently. Along with the churches, mosques, temples, and synagogues there is also a growing number of cult and occult groups meeting in the Twin Cities. Here is just a sample:

- 25,000 Mormons with the suburb of Oakdale containing a Mormon Temple.
- 14,000 Jehovah's Witnesses.
- 4,000 Eckankrists with the world headquarters located in the giant gold plated pyramid called the Temple of Eck located in the suburb of Chanhasen.
- 3,500 members belonging to the Bahai Faith.
- 20,000 Witches, which is one of the highest concentrations of witchcraft in the United States. The Twin Cities is home to the largest Witch/New Age publishing company in the world; Llewellyn Publishing located near Downtown St. Paul. The Twin Cities is home to a pagan/witch choir, a witch library, three witch childrens groups, a witch/pagan home schoolers group, and a witch/pagan babysitting service. Three witch billboards even advertise witchcraft!
- 575 different cult/occult groups active in the Twin Cities area.

SIGNIFICANT TIMELINES

- 1858 Minnesota becomes a state.
- 1875 First Mormon Church established in the Twin Cities.
- 1890 First Twin Cities Asian church established in Minneapolis.
- 1920 The suburb of Anoka is named "the Halloween Capital of the World.
- 1943 Minnesota's first Atheist organization (The Twin Cities Freethinkers) begins.
- 1946 First Twin Cities' Buddhist Temple is formed.
- 1947 First record of a Muslim immigrant settling in the Twin Cities.
- 1956 Llewellyn Publishing Company, largest Witch and New Age publisher in the world moves to St. Paul.
- 1967 First Twin Cities Muslim mosque begins.
- 1972 First Hindu group forms (Geeta Ashram Minnesota).
First Twin Cities Gay Pride parade/festival takes place.

- 1973 First Twin Cities' homosexual church is established in Minneapolis.
- 1975 Massive wave of immigrants and refugees arrive in the Twin Cities.
- 1978 First Twin Cities' Hindu temple is established.
- 1989 Eckankar moves its world headquarters to Chanhassen(suburb) and builds the huge, pyramid-shaped Temple of Eck.
- 1993 The World Council of Churches sponsors first Re-Imaging Conference in Minneapolis where God was "re-imaged" as female, communion was taken with milk and honey, and where the goddess Sophia was endorsed, promoted, and worshipped.
First Somali refugees arrive in the Twin Cities.
- 1994 Rev. Sun Moon, founder and leader of the Unification Church (Moonies) holds outreach meetings in the Twin Cities.
- 1995 Gay World Series and Gay Olympics held in the Twin Cities.
- 2001 Ku Klux Klan/Neo Nazis hold a rally at the Minnesota State Capital in St. Paul.
- 2002 First Somali church in the U.S. begins in the Twin Cities..
- 2003 Rev. Gene Robinson approved as the first openly gay bishop of any American church, during the 74th general convention of the Episcopal Church USA in Minneapolis.

CONCLUSION

We aren't in "old" Minneapolis/St. Paul anymore. The reality of our city situation has changed forever. God's people in the Twin Cities must fulfill His Great Commission in our own Jerusalem-at our very doorstep!

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WHY THE CULTS FLOURISH

By Roy E. Knuteson, Ph.D.

Once upon a time there were fewer than a dozen major cults in Christendom. Today there are hundreds, and for the most part, they are flourishing. Why? This is not counting the major religions of the world, such as Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, which number in the billions. They too are growing numerically at a remarkable rate. Why?

The Divine Perspective

For the answer, we must turn to the Word of God. Jesus never promised that genuine Christianity would dominate the world as some are claiming today. Instead, he gave a series of parables in Matthew 13 to illustrate what would happen in the period between His two advents. He predicted rapid and expansive growth as the “sons of the evil one” infiltrate the true church of God, and will be separated by the angels at the Second Coming (Matt. 13:40-43). His parables of the mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32) and the yeast (Matt. 13: 43-44) further illustrate the rapid growth of this mystery aspect of Christendom.

In the Olivet Discourse Jesus predicted that there would be many false messiahs and prophets who would “deceive many” (Matt. 24:5, 11). So many will appear with “great signs and miracles”, that almost everyone will be deceived, and even “the elect, if that were possible” (Matt 24:24). According to Jesus, true faith will be a scarce virtue as this age draws to a close. He asked: “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith in the earth? (Luke: 18:8). Apostasy, not revival, is predicted to envelop the world. Finally, consistent with this pattern of religious growth, the great “rebellion” (apostasy) occurs and the “man of lawlessness” is revealed (2 Thess: 2:3).

According to 2 Timothy 3:1, the last years of this era will conclude with a vast majority of people having a “form of godliness, but deny its power”. From the divine perspective and according to God’s sovereign purpose, true Christianity was never intended to be the majority religion of the world.

We will always be, comparatively speaking, Jesus' "little flock" (Luke 12:32). Satan, the "god of this age" will dominate the world religiously until the Savior appears to cast him into the "abyss" and establish His true kingdom (Rev. 20).

The Human Perspective

From a human viewpoint, we are witnessing an explosion of cults unlike anything Christianity has seen in its 2,000 year history. Every year new cults appear while the older ones continue to flourish. Never has the religious scene been in such a state of confusion. Why do many of the cults far exceed the growth rate of good fundamental churches? What is the secret to the great commitment that many cult members have when compared to many evangelical church members? Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons field thousands of missionaries who will go door to door witnessing while very few believers ever lead anyone to faith in Christ.

Motivational Factors

There is a lot of drive bound up in the human ego, and especially when it is coupled with the two great motivational factors found in all the cults. The first driving factor is the exclusive nature of each cultic group. They believe and proclaim that their particular organization and theirs alone is the only true religion on earth. This has been historically true of Catholicism and all the fringe groups. This concept provides tremendous motivation if truly believed. It can cause unregenerate people to do all kinds of exploits in the name of their religious cause. Great sacrifice has been demonstrated by the missionary force of these various groups around the world. It ought to be a compelling power for all Christians who actually have the truth.

The second motivational factor is the inherent, carnal idea that human effort is necessary to gain the "salvation" each group offers. Somehow, there is deeply ingrained in the human spirit the notion that religious works are necessary for acceptance by God. As a result, whether it is a minor work like baptism, or more major works like literature distribution, attendance at meetings, or the completion of a two year missionary stint, as in the case of the Mormons, it is all a great confirmation of the power of works upon the human

soul. It is almost mind-boggling what can be accomplished through the sheer power of the human mind when it is fully committed to a particular religious leader or belief. Would to God that we could see the same kind of devotion to the true message of grace in Jesus Christ.

The Real Source of Cultic Power

The Bible draws back the spiritual curtain and reveals the true source of cultic motivation and growth. According to Ephesians 6:12, the real power is “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”. The Scriptures reveal that Satan is assisted by an untiring and devoted cadre of evil henchmen who are organized to accomplish their unrighteous purposes through religious activity. This is the unseen world of demons.

Because Satan is limited in time, space and power, he must extend himself through his many evil angels who are just as wicked as he is. Satan is not in charge of a divided army, even though his various religious groups seem to be in conflict one with another. Instead, he motivates them as a compelling dictator to accomplish his diabolical will. The Devil and his angels are constantly at work, and they combine their super-powerful resources to get the job done.

In addition, Satan has vast intelligence and has therefore created a network of information that enables him and his demons to carry out stratagems on a world-wide scene. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 reveals that this satanic army is capable of producing “all power and signs and false wonders”. Since there are actually millions upon millions of these evil spirit-beings in the world, their combined intelligence and powers are very effective and efficient. It is literally true, “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Beside all this, these demons, along with their leader, have had thousands of years of successful history in the promotion of many false gospels. They, therefore, scheme cleverly and work continuously to affect the world’s philosophy and the course of religious history. They are constantly promoting rebellion against God and His purposes. Revelation 12:9 states that Satan is the one who “leads the whole world astray”.

First Timothy 4:1 reveals that “in the latter times, some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things

taught by demons”. Based on this revelation of God, we can say unequivocally that all the various and seemingly conflicting doctrines of the cults are inspired by the Devil. He is the master of religious intrigue and during this age, he clearly is the victor. True believers can be encouraged and comforted however, by the knowledge that our sovereign God and Defender- the Lord Jesus Christ-is still in control and, therefore, limits the devastation that this evil horde might otherwise accomplish.

It has already been revealed that the Devil and his demons will exert even more power in the coming days. Their forces will be used in terribly wicked ways. During the coming “great tribulation”, these evil beings will be further unleashed by God to kill and destroy (Rev. 8: 13-19), and to deceive the whole world though the supernatural powers of the Devil’s marvel-“the man of lawlessness”- who “will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped” (2 Thess.2:3-4). The one world church, soon to be organized, will be dominated by the Antichrist. We can, therefore, expect many more religious cults to arise and unite until they are finally coalesced under his control. It may appear that Satan has finally triumphed over God at last. But no! For the Bible reveals that this man, the greatest of all religious leaders, is “doomed to destruction” (2 Thess. 2:3) and so are his demonic followers (Rev. 20:10). Jesus Christ will emerge as the final victor “for He must reign until He has put all His enemies under his feet” (1Cor. 15:25).

Confronting the Cults

Once we understand the evil power behind the cults, we can go against the enemy with a greater dedication and strength. First, we are promised protection from Satan and his host “because the one who is in you (us) is greater than the one who is in the world”(1John 4:4), and 1 John 5:19 states: “We know that the one who was born of God keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him”.

Secondly, we are promised divine power. Paul stated it this way:

“For though we live in this world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, we have divine

power to demolish arguments and every pretension, that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

Clad in the full armor of God, we can “stand against the Devil’s schemes” (Eph. 6:11). We can hold up “the shield of faith with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, and we can unsheathe the mighty “sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17) to back down the Satanic forces of evil, even as our Lord did in His encounter with the Devil in the desert (Matt. 4:4-11). We really can be “more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

All scripture quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible.

BOOK REVIEW

THE CHURCH WITHOUT A NAME

By Kathleen Lewis

Reviewed by Rev. Ervin D. Ingebretson

The author writes with exceptional authority since she spent many years active in the Two by Two movement until she came to know the real truth about Jesus, who He is and what He did for her. Her purpose in writing was not to be critical of individuals committed to this religious body but to shed light on their radical cultic beliefs and methodology.

William Irvine started the Two by Two fellowship in Ireland. Edward Cooney assisted him in its development. Irvine broke away from The Faith Mission and began preaching a doctrine that opposed with passion all Christian religions. While Irvine was recognized as founder, he was often criticized for his radical methods and enforcement of doctrine. He was responsible for changing Bible meaning to conform to their concept of ministry.

It is impossible to know precisely the number of people belonging to this group because names and addresses are private. There are, approximately 450,000 in the United States. In addition, however, large numbers exist in Canada, Korea, Australia and New Zealand. It is estimated that four times that number are affected in some way by this church.

They first called themselves Pilgrims while working with The Faith Mission. They quickly acquired the name "Tramp Preachers" because they lived a life of self-denial in order to preach. Irvine's followers also earned the name "Go Preachers" because they would go out two by two. Hence the nickname "Two by Two". They also adopted the names "Truth" and "Way" since they considered themselves the only ones who would get to heaven.

There are two principles which separate this professing group from other church groups. The first is their doctrine. The basis for their formation and ministry is Matthew chapter ten, believing that this is the most important command

in the Bible. They have led their people to believe that they are the only ones in the world who understand and teach the true message of the Bible. They believe their people must be kept ignorant of the Bible. Furthermore, Scripture is not considered the Word of God until spoken by a worker, a chief leader.

These professing people do not have a systematic theology. Of primary importance is their fake understanding of the Trinity. They repudiate the Trinity. To them, Jesus is just a man, the Son of God. They do not believe that He is the Creator or equal to God in any way. Therefore, He is not to be worshipped.

For this religious body the Holy Spirit is not a Person. He is a power that indwells Jesus. The Holy Spirit is not equal to God or a person of the Godhead. They identify Jesus as the Spirit Christ.

With respect to the plan of salvation workers do not preach Jesus and the cross as the forgiveness for our sins. They believe that people must do more than trust the blood of Jesus. For them Jesus came to earth to eliminate Jewish tradition, rebuke rabbis and get rid of church buildings.

Workers oppose salvation by grace. They don't believe grace is a gift. One must work for it or buy it in some way. The author discusses many doctrinal issues which differ greatly from the beliefs of mainline churches.

Methodology is an important feature of this professing body. The authority is vested in humans, predominantly men who are called 'workers'. They may appoint elders and deacons who work under them.

A restricted life style is an important feature for the workers and other leaders. They must pledge themselves to a life of self-denial. A life of enforced poverty is demanded of them. It would be better if they did not marry and not have responsibilities of caring for a wife and family. No salaries are paid. Some workers may receive gifts from outside sources. No accounting of funds is established.

Their gatherings consisted of weekly Gospel meetings in which testimonies are given. The testimonies might be only 1-2 minutes long. They resemble the meetings of the Alcoholics Anonymous. No Scripture could be used in the

testimony. The workers kept rigid control of the format of the meetings.

They have mid-week meetings on occasion. They also had a meeting including groups from other areas. They called these conventions. Their meetings were not open to the public.

As a result of their strict life style and its demands, numerous social and family problems have arisen. The author mentions a number of moral and marriage problems as well. Workers were not qualified to counsel. Children were not taught to develop a meaningful relationship with God.

An important characteristic of cult ministries is mind control. The author lists three categories of mind control; doctrinal, psychological and sociological. It appears that the Two by Twos and other cults live by the premise. "I live it, therefore I believe it", rather than "I believe it, therefore I live it."

OFFICE NOTES

Much of the literature we offered in September at reduced prices is gone from our shelves. We say, “thank you” for your purchases. In addition, we have the following items to offer at this time:

Romanism Exposed by Romanism; J. B. Rowell;
24 pages, \$1.25.

Letters to a Roman Catholic Priest; H. A. Ironside;
44 pages, \$2.50.

What do Roman Catholics Believe; William Orr;
33 pages, \$1.50.

(A package of the three books listed above for \$5.00.)

Basic Questions on Alternative Medicine; Gary Stewart
and other authors/ Kregel Publications; 64 pages, \$3.00.

Again, first come, first served until these items are gone.

As of January 1, 2005 the price for **The Discerner** is \$10.00 per year. This increase, we feel, will help to offset printing and mailing prices. Again, our thanks to all who share in this non-profit ministry of exposing unbiblical teaching and movements. Your donations help us meet deficits in our current budget.

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