

The Discerner

the voice of... Religion Analysis Service

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 27, Number 1

January • February • March 2007

Eckankar
Confucianism

Hare Krishna

Freemasons

Jehovah's Witnesses

Humanism

Jainism

Judaism

Neopaganism

MOONIES

Univeralism

Wicca

Islam

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Exposed!

MORMONS

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

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Published Quarterly
Price \$10.00 for 4 issues
Foreign subscriptions extra

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IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened to hear of the death of Rev. Ewald Eisele, age 91, of Crosby, Minnesota. Rev. Ewald distinguished himself as a soldier in World War II when his Army unit liberated the Dachau concentration camp. He also served on a general's staff as an interpreter for German civilians and prisoners of war.

His heart's desire was to teach and preach the Bible and the Lord Jesus Christ. He pastored several churches in both California and Minnesota. For 13 years (1979-1993) he was Office Manager of the Religion Analysis Service in Minneapolis, providing counseling to those caught up or entrapped by cults.

RAS Board Members and friends extend their condolences to his surviving wife, Ellen, and to the family.

DEAR READER

In previous issues we have documented the 60th anniversary of the Religion Analysis Service (1946-2006). It is remarkable indeed that RAS has had such a lengthy and vigorous ministry in an era of "feel-good" theology, burgeoning cults and aberrational movements, and compromising ecumenism.

Three years ago I took the helm as editor of *The Discerner*, succeeding Dr. William BeVier who had effectively and faithfully led RAS for 25 years. During these past three years RAS has gone through some times of deep testing. Questions arose like: Does RAS still have a future? Is this kind of ministry out-of-date or are we only reaching an older generation whose existential situation is very different from those of the Boomers, generation X, generation XY, and now the Internet generation? Aren't there other ministries that perform the same services and perhaps even better? All of these and other questions accosted us as we faced the future.

Now, three years later RAS is on the upswing. Board Members are greatly encouraged, subscriptions are holding their own, extra gifts are up, the ministry has made substantial processing improvements and reduced expenditures, nuances for growth are being considered, and your letters continue to indicate grateful appreciation for RAS. RAS is alive and well. We praise God for His grace, wisdom, strength, and inspiration to move forward..

These three years as editor of *The Discerner* have impressed me with the gravity of the task to support "sound doctrine", to defend the "faith once delivered", and to soberly and methodically expose aberrant, unbiblical cults and movements. I want to thank every reader for your prayers and support in behalf of this ministry. God bless you!

Laurence J. Sutherland

WITH THIS ISSUE

Entertainment is big business almost everywhere these days, even in the Church. The various media and other forms of entertainment have profoundly affected the sermon, the music, promotional techniques, youth programs, and even outreach and missions programs. It is especially difficult for older Christians to come to terms with activities and styles which they formerly considered “worldly” but are now considered “culturally relevant”.

With this issue we are fortunate to feature as the lead article: “Spirit Wars in the Entertainment Zone” by Wendell Amstutz. Wendell Amstutz is no newcomer to the “entertainment zone”, having thoroughly investigated and evaluated entertainment as it relates to youth and also the demonic world of Satanism, witchcraft and paranormal activity. The article is extracted from his newest work: “Illuminating the Darkness”, and I believe it will have a strong and beneficial value for individual Christians and churches. Incidentally, I have used his extensive research relating to Satanism and witchcraft in my teaching on the cults. Amazingly, these things are relevant to even Eastern European countries such as Ukraine, Latvia, and Romania, where I have taught for 11 years.

Dr. Roy Knuteson, one of our faithful contributors over the years, submits another solid argument against Mormon theology with his “Discernment and the Sign of the Two Sticks”. It is incredible that 12,000,000 Mormons could espouse such an anti-Biblical interpretation of Ezekiel, Chapter 37. In contrast to the Mormon interpretation, it is wonderful to note that Ezekiel 37 is happening before our very eyes in Israel today.

Included also in this issue are comments and responses from various readers in the last few months. This interaction is especially helpful to many who are presently struggling with cults and aberrational movements.

Finally, we challenge you with another Quiz! I hope that the ten questions pique your interest and stimulate you to know more and to be more effective in your witness.

Laurence J. Sutherland

SPIRIT WARS FOUGHT IN THE ENTERTAINMENT ZONE

By Wendell Amstutz
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Wendell Amstutz is President of the National Community Resource Center. His book, **Exposing and Confronting Satan and Associates**, is being used as resource on all seven continents. The content of this article is from Wendell's book, **Illuminating the Darkness**.

There is a television commercial used to promote America's "fun capitol." "What goes on in Las Vegas, stays in Las Vegas." It sounds pretty good, until you think about it. Put another way, they are trying to insinuate that "what goes on in Las Vegas, doesn't effect me," or perhaps, "What goes on in my mind, does not stay in my mind."

Every normal human has been wired (created) to enjoy entertainment in one form or another. The vast interest in and influence of entertainment provides fertile ground for spiritual warfare to take place. God created entertainment and provides guidelines for gaining maximum benefits from entertainment. On the other hand, Satan values entertainment as a tool to be used for his purposes: to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10).

Most readers know and understand that spiritual warfare occurs in entertainment zones. Connecting the dots between spiritual warfare and one's personal entertainment is another matter. Entertainment's enticement can quickly cloud one's personal and spiritual judgment regarding constructive and destructive entertainment.

God creates and Satan imitates. God's purpose for creating entertainment is to provide a constructive diversion activity that ultimately brings individuals closer to His purpose for their life. Satan's goal is to corrupt entertainment using it as a destructive diversion that consistently moves the entertained person further and further away from God.

Imagination, reality-fantasy, story telling, music, reading, sports, dance and drama originated in the mind of God. God

designed and developed all of the above forms of entertainment for His purposes and glory. Satan has taken what God meant for good (entertainment) and uses it to corrupt the human mind, heart and behavior. Obviously there is consistently a great conflict between God's entertainment forces of good and Satan's tool of evil entertainment.

"Spirit Wars Fought In The Entertainment Zone" first defines the noun and verb meanings of entertainment. Next the article offers principles for understanding the entertainment wars. Steps of action that lead to an entertainment life that brings glory to God and personal fulfillment follow. The reader also will find practical tools such as the *Entertainment Grid* that help in making wise entertainment decisions. The key part of the article are the Biblical instructions that God graciously provides for experiencing victory in the spirit war of entertainment. The two-fold goal for Believers is: *win the spirit wars fought in the entertainment zone and enjoy entertainment God's way.*

Entertainment by **definition** *amuses* us primarily in a pleasant manner. Entertainment also serves as a *diversion* from life's primary activities such as work, parenting, service to others and worship.

The verb definition of the root word "entertain" often gets lost in the shuffle. Entertain means *to entertain a thought or a person*. This means to "host" the person or thought. *Whenever I engage in entertainment, I entertain the entertainment.* The significance of hosting entertainment includes:

- *When involved with entertainment, I mentally hang out with the entertainer(s).
- *The entertainment that I enjoy becomes the "fix" that soothes, seduces and elicits a response.
- *The entertainment I hang out with becomes a major influence in my belief system.
- *Then, much of my entertainment becomes a temporary/permanent resident in my mind in my home.

Before entering the spiritual battle zones of entertainment, one needs foundational understanding of the war being waged. **Entertainment principles** can significantly enhance the possibilities of winning the entertainment wars of your life. Consider the following principles.

- Entertainment first engages at a sensory level, funneling its way through one's thoughts into the filter of the mind, then gradually becoming a part of the belief system that ultimately drives the individual's behavior. Entertainment appeals to our senses before entering into the mind. Over a period of time the mind is influenced. An internal belief system begins to develop that in turn drives personal behavior.

- Satan's strategy for using entertainment closely follows the game plan used in other warfare arenas. There are obvious frontal attacks using blatant/extreme violence, sex, music, and occultism that are readily recognizable. For the vast majority of people reading this article, the frontal strategy is a loser for Satan's side. Granted, advanced obscenity does impact certain believers, but usually not in the preliminary stages of the battle. Note the qualifier.

Satan has discovered an entertainment strategy that defeats many Christians and destroys numerous not yet believers. The strategy for using entertainment to influence values includes:

- *Flying underneath the radar screen. For the most part, this entertainment is considered PG-13. Lots of reality, some good values and, oh by the way, some *not so* good values and behaviors. Lots of lies, poisonous, destructive beliefs and behavior can enter the mind as long as they come through a fairly respectable PG-13 funnel.

- *The strategy invariably includes the "frog in the kettle approach." Most individuals understand the way to get a frog to be willingly cooked is to put the frog in a pan of room temperature water that sits on a stove. Then the temperature is gradually turned up a degree or two over the next thirty minutes. Eventually the warmer water relaxes the frog who does not suspect his soon demise. Even when the water begins to boil, the frog cooperates, unaware of imminent danger. On the other hand, if a frog is taken and thrown it into a pot of boiling water, the frog will jump out or make one big mess attempting to get out.

Through repetition and employing increasingly more non-biblical values based entertainment, Satan pulls the "frog in the kettle trick" on numerous individuals. Satan teaches the entertainee destructive values and beliefs that result in destructive behavior. Most of these entertainees

have no idea that they are enjoying the swallowing of poison that will result in their ultimate demise.

The strategy has numerous destructive components that, when exposed, can be defeated.

*The **along side** component usually comes in the form of sub-plots, commercials or intriguing “bad guys” who make evil look attractive. They are bad, but make you want to enjoy “evil.”

*The **law of diminishing returns** states that to get the same degree of satisfaction from an activity as received previously, more of the activity will be required the next time. Fairly limited degrees of destructiveness slowly become substantial over time. To keep the entertainee entertained, *more* is always required. Satan’s version of “more” consistently leads further down the road of destruction.

Entertainment can easily introduce an individual into uncharted waters. Whether the domain is “new” or “much more of,” the entertainee usually has little knowledge of what is really going on. The entertainment likely will be pleasurable, so objective personal evaluation will be missing.

*Entertainment can be an extremely controversial matter. Satan uses **entertainment which creates controversy** within the family, relatives, church congregations and community. The conflicts caused by disagreement over entertainment can be as, or more, destructive than the entertainment itself.

Satan’s entertainment activity frequently is accompanied by **red flags that go unnoticed**. Red flags to that need close monitoring include the following:

- “*At least attachments.*” When the phrase “at least” is attached to a person, product, activity or form of entertainment, one can accurately assume that part of the package is less than desirable, is missing, is not the best, or is wrong. Currently the most “at least,” centers around the occult based Harry Potter series of books. To the comment “at least the kids are reading,” one must ask, “**what** are the kids reading?”

- *“To be perfectly honest with you”*- does that mean they have not been honest previously?
- *“The program is good, but”* But almost always negates the preceding positive.
- The language/sex/violence in the movie *“isn’t too bad”*. There is some bad. How bad is bad?
- It is a *“PG-13 experience”*. PG-13 can mean what R used to mean. PG-13 is often entertainment intentionally under-R-ated.
- *“Entertainment fads come and go”*...*“this too shall pass.”* The staying power of negative fads cannot be predicted. Neither can the lasting influence of the fad be predicted.
- *“But it doesn’t mean that to me.”* Words, ideas, and symbols convey meaning. If destructive content accompanies the words, ideas, and symbols used in entertainment, then know that Satan will misuse all of the above. He is the master of deception.
- *The “hold fast to that which is good”* argument of I Thessalonians 5:21 is used to justify some good in the midst of mostly junk entertainment. The problem is that the user of the entertainment giving this argument, fails to read the context of the verse. Paul says, *“Quench not the Spirit. Despise not the prophesyings, prove all things; hold fast to things that are good. Abstain from all appearances of evil.”*
- *“Everyone is enjoying it...Millions watch, it must be good... could a million people be wrong?”* Yes. Numbers have never been the determining factor for God’s standard of morality.
- The entertainment being considered is *“classic beyond question classical.”* Classic in style does not mean Biblical morals. Always ask, who has defined the entertainment as classic and based on what or whose standards. Certain *“classic entertainment”* is classically immoral, wrong and anti-Biblical.

• Switch gears... make a 180-degree turn regarding the above mentioned entertainment discussion. Look at entertainment from God’s perspective. To be pro-active in the entertainment zone, start with God’s perspective on entertainment.

Know what His word (the Bible) says concerning entertainment. Then allow God's Word to mold your belief system, your values and your entertainment practices, so that God can be glorified.

God KNOWS Entertainment

God knows entertainment from the inside-out and the outside-in better than anyone alive. Before man existed, God totally thought through and designed entertainment. ***ENTERTAINMENT IS GOD'S IDEA AND CREATION.*** After creating Adam and Eve He gave mankind the gift of developing and enjoying entertainment. The world's greatest playwrights, musicians, actors-actresses, athletes, writers and artists have received their mega talent, their mind and their life as a gift from God. Nothing that man has done constructively or destructively with the gifts has caught or will catch God off guard. When it comes to the many forms of entertainment, *no one* that God created knows more about any form of entertainment that God designed, than God does. Creation (mankind, entertainment) has not, does not and will not outshine the Creator when it comes to entertainment.

God and Gift-Giving

Imagination, fantasy and the ability to enjoy entertainment are gifts from God. God chose to equip mankind with the ability to imagine, fantasize and enjoy entertainment. God's good and perfect gifts came wrapped in guidelines for our usage. The misuse of His gifts opens the door to destructiveness. Allow Scripture to add insight to the above statement. When it comes to creation, God created only the best.

Genesis 1:31 (NIV) says: "*God saw all he made, and it was very good.*"

The New Testament agrees. Mark 7:37 (NIV) says, "*Jesus does all things well.*"

James 1:17 (NIV), in describing the gifts from God, says: "*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights who does not change like shifting shadows.*"

God is PRO-Entertainment and PRO-Imagination

God is PRO entertainment and PRO imagination. He *loves* both the fantasy and reality versions of entertainment. He is the author and creator of entertainment and imagination.

When it comes to entertainment (reality and fantasy). NO ONE knows or does it better than God. He first designed entertainment. Then God created people with skills to entertain. Additionally, God gave us the opportunity to use entertainment as one of His perfect gifts.

Some years ago a song by Larry Norman asked the question, "Why does the devil have all of the good music?" The devil may understand music, but he most certainly does not have all the good music. He has only a cheap imitation. God is **THE** master musician.

Consider the Biblical experiences of entertainment that played key roles in celebration.

*Dance

-Exodus 15:20 Miriam led the people in dance.

-II Samuel 6:14, 16 David leaped and danced before the Lord with all his might.

God has turned our mourning into dancing.

*Singing

- I Chronicles 16:23 Sing unto the Lord all the earth.

-Psalm 7:17 I will sing praise to the name of the Lord.

-Psalm 59:16 I will sing of your power, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.

-Proverbs 29:6 The righteous sings and rejoices.

-James 5:13 If any be merry, let him sing psalms.

*Shouting

-Psalm 5:11 Let them shout for joy.

-Psalm 35:27 Let them shout for joy and be glad.

-Psalm 47:1 Let them shout unto God with the voice.

-Psalm 65:13 They shout for joy, they also sing.

*Noise Celebration

-II Chronicles 30:21 And the children of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, *singing* with *loud* instruments unto the Lord.

-Psalm 150:5 Praise God with loud cymbals.

*Instrumental music

-I Samuel 16:16 David's skill in playing the harp soothed the soul of King Saul.

*Story Telling

-Luke 15:11 Jesus was the master of all story tellers, e.g. Prodigal Son.

*Enjoying life

-Matthew 11:19 Jesus rejoiced so fully in life that He was accused of being a winebibber and a glutton. Jesus obviously was not drunk or a glutton which was and is sinful.

*Creator of laughter

-God is the inventor of laughter... He has to have an incredible sense of humor; look at some of His creations. He must be the originator of, "laugh a lot, otherwise you cry far too much." Laughter is a gift that heals physically, emotionally, spiritually.

*Celebrations... Feasts

-The Old Testament describes ten feasts and festivals that the Children of Israel were to participate in with the purpose of commemorating and celebrating previous events that God had blessed. The feasts and festivals were as short as one day and as long as ten days. The feasts and festivals were pleasant times involving food, fellowship, and entertainment. God taught His children to include good times to enhance and keep fresh meaningful memories. Now I am not recommending a periodic romp in sin, but I am suggesting that we do need deeper, more earthy experiences of exhilaration. It is healing and refreshing to cultivate a wide appreciation for life. Our spirit can become weary with straining after God just as our body can become weary with overwork. Celebration helps us relax and enjoy the good things of the earth.

Entertainment: A gift from God wrapped in Biblical guidelines

God in His wisdom and kindness gave guidelines so that we can best enjoy entertainment and imagination. Paul, in his letter to the Roman church (12:1), starts with the big pic-

ture. Paul realized that entertainment was one of the gifts that could easily envelop or surround one's total body and being. He thus asks believers to give of their whole being to God as a living sacrifice. The living sacrifice needed to be based in holiness, being acceptable to God. We learn what God considers is holy and acceptable by reading and studying God's Word. Note that Paul believes that all of this is our reasonable service to God in light of all God has done for us. Verse 1 (KJV) says:

I ask you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your *bodies* a living sacrifice, holy *acceptable* unto God which is your reasonable service. (Italics author's choice, not in actual text.)

Next, Paul gets more specific in dealing with the role of our mind when it comes to entertainment, imagination and fantasy. Chapter 12, verse 2 (KJV) says:

And be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Before examining Romans 12:2, consider the admonition or commands Paul offers to his friends at Corinth in his second letter and his commands to the Philippians. First, II Corinthians 10:4,5 (NIV) states:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We 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.

Divine power is available to believers to demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. Much of entertainment historically has, currently is, and will in the future set itself up against the knowledge of God. Satan uses entertainment and imagination as powerful tools for combating the truth of God's Word that steer us away from God into sin and destructiveness. On the other hand, God constructively purposes entertainment and imagination as a means ultimately to draw us to Himself.

Note Paul's instruction for mind activity relating to enter-

tainment. Believers are to ***take EVERY thought captive to make it obedient to Christ***. Thoughts are at the very core of the mind, dictating each phrase of entertainment. Paul teaches that the guidelines of the Scripture (taking every thought captive) apply both to *reality* and to *fantasy*; to *non-fiction* and *fiction*; to *actual behavior* and to *imagination*. All thoughts are to be taken captive and made obedient to Christ. Speaking of making the mind obedient to Christ, consider Paul's command to the Philippians (2:5 KJV):

Let the mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Later in the same letter to the Christians at Philippi (4:8 KJV) Paul describes the mind Christ wants believers to have. Paul instructs:

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

A given entertainment fits these categories: *think, dwell, and enjoy*.

Additional guidelines for entertainment are found in Paul's second letter to the I.Thessalonians (5:21-22), "Test everything, hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil." The King James version translates verse 22,

Avoid even the appearance of evil.

Defining evil evokes controversy. When possible let the Bible speak for God's meaning of evil. Concerning the evil of occult practices and entertainment, God says in Deuteronomy 18:14, "The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you the Lord your God has not permitted you to do so."

Taking thoughts captive,-making them obedient to Christ; having the mind of Christ within; and thinking in a Godly way, provide the "how to's" of Paul's insight back at Romans 12:2 (KJV). Recall that Paul says:

And be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Desiring to daily experience that good, acceptable and perfect

will of God with regards to entertainment sounds great. Connecting the dots between God's Word and entertainment habits is another matter. Start by knowing the will of God. To know God's will, go to the Word of God. ***The Will of God NEVER contradicts the Word of God.*** Christians must run all of their reality, fantasy and imagination based entertainment through the filter of God's Word. Entertainment that opposes or counteracts the Word of God IS NOT part of God's will for one's life.

Additional steps of action

- **Jesus (Matthew 5:19) commands: Do and then teach.**

The way to impact the entertainment culture is first to be a positive example, not offering excuses. Jesus said, "*Do and then teach.*" Enjoy Godly entertainment to its fullest. Then teach others to experience similar joy. Since "more is caught than taught," start with your own vibrant entertainment experience. Then follow through by teaching positive Biblical truths and principles.

- **Be solution focused.** "*Deal with problems; dwell on answers.*"

Like the men of Issachar, we need "to understand the times and know what we should do." (I Chronicles 12:32) This means that positive, constructive, entertainment alternatives are provided and promoted. We must challenge some of our best minds to create "classic entertainment" that brings glory to God in multiple ways.

- **Use entertainment as a door opener for discussion and sharing Christ.**

Use various forms of entertainment as door-openers to discussing spiritual matters. This will require some degree of knowledge if you are to ask good questions and make quality observations.

That there are numerous theses of entertainment that are destructive is a no-brainer. It is not enough to just point out the problem and be of an anti-thesis mindset. We must supply a superior thesis as the alternative.

- **Understand how real and lasting change takes place regarding entertainment.**

+ Lasting change requires a choice... I desire to and choose

to change my entertainment habits.

+ The change ultimately will require a new belief system that results in internal change.

+ Change likely will take place over time... there are no quick fixes.

+ “Complete change“ is possible. Most changes will be of the “Three steps forward, two steps backward” variety. Process and progress describe one’s earthly journey. Perfection is the God and eternity side.

In my previous editions of **Exposing and Confronting Satan and Associates** lists of bands, movies and tv shows that involved the occult content were provided. The lists became outdated the moment the book went to press. To stay up to date with the daily changing world of video games we highly recommend the work of:

Al Menconi Ministries: 1.760.591.46961;
www.almenconi.com

To learn about music, videos and movies we highly recommend the work of:

Plugged In Magazine: 1.800.232.6459;
www.pluggedin.online.com

Illuminating the Darkness (the book that has replaced *Exposing and Confronting Satan and Associates*) offers a tool for making wise decisions concerning the daily path of entertainment. The *Entertainment Grid* provides questions to ask of entertainment plus offers helpful insights regarding entertainment choices.

Ultimately *everyone* makes his own entertainment choices. Constructive entertainment decisions lead to a constructive life that honors God. Destructive entertainment choices lead to a destructive life that dishonors God. Begin running your entertainment choices through the *Entertainment Grid*. Instead of instantaneous “remote control” decisions, make your entertainment decisions based on God’s Word and the guidelines that produce God honoring thoughts, beliefs and behavior.

Entertainment Grid (Copyright NCRC 2003)

- *Constructive-Destructive-Neutral*

- *Is the entertainment constructive in nature?

- This is usually, but not always a reason to endorse the entertainment. Evaluate the entertainment keeping the “good-better-best” question in mind.

- *Is the entertainment neutral in nature?

- Neutral entertainment may be ok, but it takes you nowhere, leading to a bland life full of boredom. Neutrality requires thought prior to involvement. Morally neutral entertainment often turns out to be a filler. Instead of fillers, saturate your life with good things.

- *Is the entertainment destructive in nature?... This is a no-brainer. AVOID!!

- *Time Consumption*

- *What amount of time is required to enjoy the form of entertainment?

- *How much time do you have to spend to make the entertainment constructive?

- *Since you have a limited amount of time, is this the best and most wise use of your time?

- *In the future, will you regret or be glad that you invested time in this activity?

- *Addiction*

- *Do you control the entertainment; does the entertainment control you?

- *Can you let go of this form of entertainment if:

- it is or becomes destructive in nature?

- something better or more important comes along?

- I cannot afford the time, energy, finances, or health required?

- *The Scriptures*

- *Does involvement affirm or violate the commands and principles of Scriptures?

-Are belief systems and/or doctrines evident or advocated that are contrary to the Bible?

-Are values and philosophies espoused that are non-biblical

- *Conscience*

- *Does or should the activity violate your inner spirit or conscience?

- A God given inner voice or spirit frequently will affirm or deny the rightness of the entertainment.

- Because the entertainment does not violate your conscience does not mean that the entertainment is right. It is possible that your conscience has become dulled. Conscience is not more important than the Bible.

- Does the entertainment raise questions, doubts, or concerns? **When in doubt, don't.**

- *Personal Belief System*

- *Does the entertainment **agree with, compromise, or contradict** your belief system?

- *Does the entertainment **strengthen, neutralize, or weaken** your belief system?

- *The Presence of Jesus, of family, of others*

- *If Jesus were bodily present, would you ask Him to participate with you? Would He join you? Why?

- *If a family member (parent, sibling, spouse, or child) were present, would you want them to participate with you?

- *If other people of faith *or* people seeking answers for life observed your participation, would they be helped or hurt by your example? (Romans 14)

- *The Philippians Factor*

- *Does the form of entertainment pass the Philippians 4:8 test?

- Is it true?

- Is it noble?

- Is it right?

- Is it pure?

- Is it lovely?

- Is it admirable?

- Is it excellent?

- Is it praiseworthy?

- *Supernatural Power*

- *Is a supernatural power evident that has a source other than the God of the Bible?

God forbids His children even to listen to occult practices.
(Deuteronomy 18:14)

*Are there occult, witchcraft, psychic, satanic, new-age, vampire-goth symbols, names, practices incorporated in the entertainment?

•*Imagination and Thought Life*

*Are your imaginations and thoughts steered in an unwholesome or non-biblical direction?

*Is immorality, sensuality, or immodesty depicted, or does it arouse lust?

*Does it incite fear or glorify evil or violence?

•*Character and Reputation Development / Protection*

*Will it promote questionable character traits?

-Proverbs 4:23: Keep your heart with all diligence.

-I Thessalonians 5:22: Abstain from the appearance of evil.

•*Cost Analysis Benefit*

*What will you get back for the investment you are making/spending?

-Financially?

-Mental Health?

-Physical Health?

-Friendships?

-Spiritual Health?

-Your Time?

-Family Relationships?

•*Financial and Recommendation Involvement*

*Do you wish to use your money to financially benefit and encourage the suppliers of the entertainment?

*Is it your desire to recommend or endorse this form of entertainment to others through your participation?

•*Fantasy and Reality*

*Does the entertainment tell the whole story and show the end results?

*If the entertainment fantasy were to become total reality-including the end results, would you be pleased?

*Do you want to end up where the fantasy of entertainment will take you?

*Are you willing to pay the price that the end results would demand?

•*The D Factors*

*Desensitize: Does the entertainment take away alertness and/or sensitivity to destructive activity?

*Dignity: Does this enhance or degrade the dignity of those involved?

*Disturbed or disturbing: Does the entertainment focus on disturbed behavior, or does it teach or lead to disturbing thoughts and behavior?

Personal Reflections

It is easy to recognize that entertainment is moving ever more into occult based topics (movies, television, card games, video games). Where there is an occasional writing or commentary on this, there seems to be no significant outcry from any source. Speculate as to why many can see a problem, but few can respond to it.

Examine your community's entertainment venues. List all you can think of that have produce "at least"... comments, indicating there might be some mixing of positive and negative entertainment.

Examine your most enjoyed entertainment according to the Entertainment Grid. How many of the trouble spots noted in the grid are potential issues with your entertainment? What entertainment adjustments could you make that would cause your pastimes to be less troublesome or potentially demon inviting?

DISCERNMENT AND THE SIGN OF THE TWO STICKS

By Roy E. Knuteson, Ph.D.

If there was ever a time when Christians need to be spiritually wide-awake and watchful, it is now! The Apostle Paul exhorted his generation and ours, to “test everything, hold on to the good” (1 Thess. 5:21). In 1 Corinthians 2:15, we are informed that the “spiritual man makes judgments about all things”. The Apostle John exhorts believers to “test the spirits to see if they are of God because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The great need of the hour is for spiritual discernment by every believer.

Scriptural Warnings

Throughout the New Testament there are numerous warnings for Christians to heed and obey. We are to be alert to “destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1), “godless myths” (2 Tim. 4:7), “endless genealogies” (1 Tim.1:4), “false doctrines” (1 Tim. 1:4), “deceptive philosophy” (Col. 2:8), “deceiving spirits” (2 Tim. 4:1), “the spirit of falsehood” (1 John 4:6) and “human wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:17). Jesus said: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly, they are ferocious wolves” (Matt. 7:15). The Apostle Paul declared that “savage wolves would come from among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!” (Acts 20:29-31).

He warned Timothy that “evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). In addition, Satan “masquerades as an angel of light” to confound and confuse people everywhere (2 Cor. 11:14). Moreover, “the Spirit clearly says that in the later times some will abandoned the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron” (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

Obviously, there is a tremendous need to distinguish truth from error, yet so few actually do it. As a result they are “blown here and there by every wind of teaching” (Ephesians

4:14). To expose error is considered by many to be unloving and intolerant. However, it must be done, or we disobey God.

With the rise of the “mega” and the “emergent” churches, there has been, generally speaking, a de-emphasis of doctrine and an emphasis upon subjective experience, which naturally results in an accommodation of numerous points of view. True expository preaching and teaching are rare today and in its place people are gathering teachers who “will tickle their ears” with interesting stories and humanistic formulas for success and happiness. Spiritual discernment is not taught nor encouraged. It is a rare church and pastor who will expose the errors of the cults, for to do so could result in a loss of people and their financial support. Yet the cults recruit the vast majority of their converts from local churches. This is the fruit of the lack of discernment.

Why The Cults Flourish

One of the reasons why the cults flourish today is because the average church member is untaught and therefore open to false doctrine. Few ever take the time to “test everything” as the Bible commands. To do so however, requires a working knowledge of the Bible which demands diligent and serious study (2 Tim. 2:15). Paul’s prayer for the Philippian believers was that they would “abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best. . .” (Philippians 1:10). The Hebrew Christians were reminded that “solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish truth from error” (Hebrews 5:14).

The second reason for a general lack of discernment is the gross ignorance of many regarding the basic rules for interpreting the Scriptures, which is called “hermeneutics”. This science includes the normal and literal meaning of words, their context, historical setting, and correct application. These must be carefully observed or a faulty interpretation and application will always result.

A third cause for spiritual fallout is the lack of genuine dependence upon the Holy Spirit whom Jesus called “The Spirit of truth”. Our Lord said: “He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). John also reminds us that true believers have received “the anointing” and therefore need to depend upon the Holy Spirit who will teach them, as opposed to the

false teachers who are promulgating their heresies (1 John 2:27). An example of this lack of spiritual discernment is illustrated by the Latter Day Saints' acceptance of their version of "The Sign of the Two Sticks" in Ezekiel 37.

The Sign of The Two Sticks

On April 28, 573 B.C., Ezekiel prophesied: The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, take a stick of wood and write on it, 'belonging to Judah and the Israelites associated with him'. Then take another stick of wood, and write on it, 'Ephraim's stick, belonging to Joseph and all the house of Israel associated with him'. Join them together into one stick so that they will become one in your hand" (Ezekiel 37:15-17).

A normal reading of these verses in context, reveals that Ezekiel was to illustrate by means of this object lesson, the fact that God was going to re-unite the divided kingdoms after the Babylonian Captivity and in the future history of Israel. The Lord explained the meaning of Ezekiel's message in verses 21-22 of Ezekiel 37.

"This is what the Sovereign Lord says: 'I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their land. I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms'".

Can anything be more clear than that? Could not an elementary school child understand this explanation by the Lord? Can these plain words mean something totally different than that which was originally "breathed out by God"? (2 Tim. 3:16). Is it possible that this vital message was completely misunderstood for over 2,400 years until Joseph Smith, the master manipulator of Scripture, revealed its meaning in 1840?

Twisting Scripture

Ignoring all the normal principles of interpretation, Joseph Smith informed his gullible followers that the "sticks" in Ezekiel 37 were not two literal pieces of wood, but instead they were actually two "scrolls", thus supporting his contention that they represented manuscripts of the Bible and the Book of Mormon. He was wrong. The Hebrew word

means “sticks” and is never translated “scrolls” in its many uses in the Bible. However, building upon this faulty interpretation of words, Smith then informed his people that the stick of Ephraim or Joseph is the record of one group from the tribe of Ephraim that was led from Jerusalem to America in about 600 B.C., and that the stick of Judah (The Bible) and the stick of Joseph (The Book of Mormon) will become one in the Lord’s hand”. (1 Nephi 13:15-20). Thus the Book of Mormon is placed on a par with the Bible, and is proclaimed as such by Mormon theology today.

By this clever twist of Ezekiel’s prophecy , the coming forth of the latter day scriptures of Mormonism was therefore foretold. (1 Nephi 13:38-41) God Himself supposedly confirmed this to Smith in this single and confusing sentence in 2 Nephi 3:12:

“Therefore the fruit of thy loins shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write, and that which was written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah shall grow together, unto the confounding of false doctrines and the laying down of contentions and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, and the bringing them to the knowledge of their fathers in the latter days and also to the knowledge of my covenants saith the Lord”.

This is a classic example of those whom Peter foretold two thousand years ago:

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies . . . many will follow their shameful ways and bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed they will exploit you with stories they have made up” (2 Peter 3:16). What an apt description of the founding of Mormonism!

Mormons believe that the Bible is an incomplete revelation from God. Hence there is the need for their additional books. In fact, the Book of Mormon criticizes those who believe that the Bible is the complete and final revelation of God. In 2 Nephi 29, God is reported to have said:

“Because my words shall hiss forth, many of the Gentiles shall say “A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible and there cannot be any more Bible”. . . Thou fool that shall say: “a

Bible, we have got a Bible and we need no more Bible”. . .
Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews? . . .
Wherefore, because ye have a Bible, you need not suppose
that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that
I have not caused more to be written “ (V:3,6,10).

The 8th article of faith of Mormonism states that the Bible is the word of God “as far it was translated correctly” by Joseph Smith in 1833. Interestingly, Smith’s “*Inspired Version of the Bible*” has never been published by the Mormon Church. It is therefore quite ironic that while they claim that the Bible was severely corrupted and is therefore an inferior book to the Book of Mormon, they still use it to prove that the superior book (The Book Of Mormon) was predicted centuries ago. This is the maze of Mormonism. Discerning Christians can readily see the errors of this cult as illustrated by this study of “The Sign of the Two Sticks”.

All Scriptures are taken from the New International Version

READERS WRITE:

of the Bible.

Dear D (Who asks about Bullingerism, ed.),

Ethelbert William Bullinger (1837-1913) was an ordained Anglican clergyman and profound biblical scholar, and hymn writer. His family traced its roots back to the great Swiss reformer Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1557). He authored many books (most of which are still in print today) and a monthly journal called “*Things To Come*.”

He dedicated a lot of time and effort to his involvement with the Trinitarian Bible Society.

Theologically, he is most known for his strong advocacy of Dispensationalism, but especially hyper or ultra-Dispensationalism. He was a leader of what is known as Acts 28 Dispensationalism, believing that the present church or grace age did not begin until the end of the Book of Acts and the writing of Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians.

Some other distinctive of E.W. Bullinger was his advocacy of the “Gospel In the Stars” controversy, in which he maintained that the gospel was written in the constellations of the Zodiac. I have written a critique of this view in an article in the *Discerner Magazine* (the journal of *Religion Analysis Service*), and which is available on line at Camcenter.org.

Bullinger also wrote a somewhat controversial book on biblical numerology, and was an advocate of a form of annihilationism, the idea that unbelievers do not spend eternity in hell, but are eventually destroyed.

As to his *Companion Bible*, it is considered a classic in scholarship, and is worth studying, given the concerns and distinctives I have outlined above. In other words, if you are a serious student of God’s word, you can benefit from his scholarship, and ignore Bullinger’s weaknesses. However, if you are just beginning to study the Bible, I would recommend other study Bibles such as the *Ryrie Study Bible* or the *NIV Study Bible*.

God bless, Steve Lagoon, R.A.S.

Énclosed is my subscription to *The Discerner*. *I enjoy it so much. I have been taking it for years - I think back to the 60's. I'm 83 years old and still learning and opening my mind to God's good Word.*

Alice B.,

.....

Good Day, Mr. B:

*We would like to thank you for your phone inquiry and the support you have given the ministry. In answer to your inquiry regarding both the catalog and the publication of articles in *The Discerner*, I'm sorry to report that Religion Analysis Service no longer sells books or tracts, and for this reason, we are unable to provide you with a catalog.*

*However, the focus of the ministry is upon *The Discerner* quarterly which is a small and excellent magazine providing information in the form of articles on various aberrational Movements within Christendom. The articles are submitted by various authors and upon approval by the Editor, these are published.*

Ron Anderson, Treasurer of RAS

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Dear RAS,

May God's blessing be upon you and your work. Enclosed you will find a check for \$100.00. This is a belated year-end gift for 2006. We at Immanuel Baptist are thankful for you and are praying that God will use you and your ministry to the fullest extent to glorify Him.

Wayne A., Treasurer

.....

Dear Sirs:

I have been rereading a copy of *The Discerner*, (April, May, June 1991). The article is "Demonism - Fact or Fable" by C. Raubin Lindquist. Is this article still available?

It is an appropriate article for these times and should not be out of print!

Sincerely yours, M.B, OK

Reply: Yes, it was available. RAS sent her three copies of the

above article.

CORRECTION

In reply to a letter about Christadelphians (The Discerner, October -December 2006) Professor David Larsen writes: “The information about the transfer of the college to Atlanta was news to me. Thank you for that correction. The anti-Trinitarian stance of COGGC and its “Unitarianism” does make it heretical to all orthodox Christians. This is the heart of the case against the movement. Dunn and Brown, notwithstanding their academic posts, if they hold this they are heretical, in my judgment. The people in Abrahamic Faith whom I know around Rockford-Oregon, Illinois, are bitten with this serious defection from Trinitarian affirmation which has been central to Christianity since the beginning. We stand with Athanasius against Arius and all of his successors. My prayer for you is that you will thus honor the Son as co-equal and consubstantial with the Father. cf. John 5:22-23.

David Larsen, Professor Emeritus, Trinity Evangelical
Divinity School

QUIZ on ENTERTAINMENT, etc

1. Tom Cruise, the actor, is identified with what cult?
 - a. Transcendental Meditation
 - b. Scientology
 - c. Christian Science
 - d. Theosophy
2. Shirley McLaine popularized
 - a. Zoroastrianism
 - b. Eckankar
 - c. New Age
 - d. Hare Krishna
3. Michael Jackson has been notably accused of
 - a. Pedophilia
 - b. Glossalalia
 - c. Sedition
 - d. Acrophobia
4. The wealthiest sports figure of recent times has been
 - a. the basketball player, Michael Jordan
 - b. the golfer, Tiger Woods
 - c. the formula car-racer, Michael Schumacher
 - d. the boxer, Mike Tyson
5. Which of the following, according to leading researchers, has the profoundest influence on youth?
 - a. Music
 - b. Sports
 - c. Movies
 - d. Television
6. The most common symbol of Satanism is
 - a. the crystal ball
 - b. the pentagram
 - c. the spiral
 - d. the amulet
7. The best practical measure against sexual promiscuity among young people is
 - a. universal public moral education
 - b. contraceptives/condoms
 - c. parental guidance
 - d. total abstinence

8. Who was a great example of moral purity in the Old Testament?
 - a. David
 - b. Solomon
 - c. Joseph
 - d. Jacob
9. Which is “not” a Biblical quote?
 - a. “Keep yourselves from idols”
 - b. “Crime does not pay”
 - c. “Fear God and keep His commandments”
 - d. “Avoid even the appearance of evil”
10. The writer of Ecclesiastes pursued “hedonism” which is
 - a. the all-consuming pursuit of pleasure
 - b. the extreme desire for notoriety and fame
 - c. the inordinate preoccupation with death
 - d. the disturbing desire for self-affliction

Answers: 1. (b); 2 (c); 3 (a); 4 (c); 5 (a); 6.(b); 7 (d); 8 (c); 9. (b); 10 (a)

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