



PERSONAL  
FREEDOM  
OUTREACH

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newsletter

# A LIE GROWS IN BROOKLYN

## THE FURTHER CORRUPTION OF ARIANISM

by Rev. G. Richard Fisher

Almost from its beginning, the Watchtower Society has promoted the fourth-century heresy called Arianism. From its standard reference works such as *Aid to Bible Understanding* to a recent three-part series on the doctrine of the Trinity, the Society has insisted that this essential Christian belief is not consistent with biblical truth.

Jeremy C. Jackson explains Arianism this way:

"To emphasize Christ's distinction from the Father, Arius downplayed the divinity of the Son, asserting that He was actually created by the Father. There was also, it is true, a whiff of Platonism here: perhaps Christ's assumption of a physical form inhibited Arius from seeing him as fully God."<sup>1</sup>

In short, Arius of Alexandria taught against the doctrine of the Trinity and relegated Jesus to the status of a mini-god. This made Arius a polytheist. Arius' bias was scripturally refuted by the Alexandrian apologist Athanasius<sup>3</sup> and Arius was expelled from the Church.

While the promotion of this heresy is sad, sadder still are the dishonest methods the Watchtower Society uses in trying to justify its belief in Arianism.

Jehovah's Witnesses hate being referred to as Arians and try to deny any association (see the Watchtower article "We Know What We Worship," *The Watchtower*, Sept 1, 1984). The writers of this article misused Arius because they knew his position characterized them as Arians. They cite a few small differences, but the fact is that the likenesses are too great. He and they taught that Christ was created by the Father and was a subordinate being (see *Baker's Dictionary of*

*the Bible*, page 63, "Arianism"). In trying to play down the worship given to Christ, they fall into the doctrinal lineage of the heretical bishop.

Watchtower writers use partial quotes and out-of-context citations to distort orthodox writers and make them appear to support their view of Christ's nature. For instance, in the Feb. 1, 1984, *Watchtower*, in an article called "The Trinity - Should You Believe It?," they suggest on page 7 that the warning in 1 Timothy 4:1 about the "doctrine of demons" could be a reference to the Trinity doctrine. Defining the doctrine of demons is simple. Paul calls it a departure "from the faith," that is, a moving away from New Testament, Apostolic doctrine (vs. 1). Its manifestations will be lies and a legalistic asceticism (vv. 2, 3). The Jehovah's Witnesses - who deny the triune nature of God, Christ's bodily resurrection, Christ's atoning sacrifice for our sins and salvation by grace alone, a heavenly home for believers and a literal hell for unbelievers - have departed about as far from the faith as anyone can. On top of that, their literature writers have lied repeatedly in defending their false doctrines.

In their publication, *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, on page 22, they say:

"The New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967 Edition, Vol. XIV, p. 306) admits that 'the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the Old Testament.' It also admits that the doctrine must be dated from about three hundred and fifty years after the death of Jesus Christ."

This is dishonest indeed. The article actually reads this way:

"The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the OT. In the NT the oldest

evidence is in the Pauline epistles, especially 2 Cor 13:13, and 1 Cor 12:4-6. In the Gospels evidence of the Trinity is found explicitly only in the baptismal formula of Mt 28:19. **In the Old Testament.** The mystery of the Holy Trinity was not revealed to the Chosen People of the OT. On account of the polytheistic religions of Israel's pagan neighbors it was necessary for the teachers of Israel to stress the oneness of God. In many places of the OT, however, expressions are used in which some of the Fathers of the Church saw references or foreshadowings of the Trinity. The personified use of such terms as the Word of God [Ps 32(33).6] and the Spirit of God (Is 63:14) is merely by way of poetic license, though it shows that the minds of God's people were being prepared for the concepts that would be involved in the forthcoming revelation of the doctrine of the Trinity. **In the New Testament.** The revelation of the truth of the triune life of God was first made in NT."

The encyclopedia goes on to mention the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19, saying:

"Since the Son and the Holy Spirit are mentioned here on a par with the Father, the passage clearly teaches that they are equally divine with the Father, who is obviously God."

Incidentally, the statement that the doctrine of the Trinity did not appear until 350 years later can be found nowhere in that article.

Regardless of one's views on the traditions of Roman Catholicism, there is no

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# EDITORIALS

## BE CAREFUL WHOM YOU RALLY BEHIND

*Christianity Today*, in its Sept. 7, 1984, issue, reported that rallies have been held to express sympathy for Unification Church leader Sun Myung Moon as a misunderstood and falsely accused religious leader." The article said:

"'Religious freedom' rallies around the country are drawing thousands of unsuspecting Christians into emotionally charged meetings that portray Moon as a persecuted man of God. No ties with the Unification Church are mentioned in promotional mailings. The sponsors are identified as a coalition of Christian leaders including author Tim LaHaye, Robert Grant of Christian Voice, and Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Greg Dixon and Everett Sileven, leaders of a coalition of independent, fundamentalist churches, are involved as well."

"The sponsors view Moon as a persecuted ally in an escalating battle against secular humanism and government intrusion into church activities."

Inside Washington's Constitution Hall, the pageant linked Sileven and Moon with victims of persecution from America's past, including Joseph Smith, founder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the *CT* article went on to say. The article quoted LaHaye as saying: "I'm not concerned about the Unification Church advancing its cause here in America, because I'm convinced there are so many people being freed by the truth of the Gospel. What I'm concerned about is the spread of religious persecution that will lead to a totalitarian state where we will lose religious freedom."

LaHaye's fears stem from his belief that the humanist conspiracy in our country is so pervasive and so powerful that if left unchecked, its perpetrators will stage a takeover and strip people of all religious freedoms. LaHaye is so consumed by this idea that he has developed, we believe, two big blind spots.

The first is his seeing the loss of religious freedom in any degree as the greatest of all threats and evils. The second is his failure to recognize that Moon was imprisoned for a clear violation of the law.

Regarding his first blind spot, we must remember that the Church flourishes and grows even in countries where religious freedom has been restricted or stripped from the citizenry. There are no biblical guarantees of religious freedom, only advice on how to handle persecution.

We believe that cults and heretical teachings pose a far greater danger to this country than does the loss of religious freedom. We consider Moon's teaching part of that threat. Warnings against heresy take up more space in Scripture (see Acts 20:28-32, Titus 3:9-11, 2 Peter 2:1-22, Jude 1-9) than do discussions of religious freedom, of which there may be none. The early church grew in spite of – perhaps because of – government harassment and restrictions.

We believe that LaHaye, who is otherwise so lucid and orthodox in his teachings, is acting in clear violation of 2 John 11, which says, "anyone who welcomes him [a deceiver, see verse 7] shares his wicked work."

In regard to the second blind spot, Moon's case is not one of unjust religious persecution. Moon was convicted of a felony and is receiving his due punishment. Romans 13 says that Christians should cooperate with their lawgivers and not object to the punishment of lawbreakers. Neither Moon, Jim Jones nor any other "religious leader" should be exempt from the laws of our land. Religion is not a cover for sin and unlawful activities. Liberty is not liberty for us to do as we please. Biblical liberty involves a person's using the grace of God to do as he should. Neither Moon nor anyone else should be allowed to pocket \$162,000 in tax money. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's," our Lord and Savior said.

One would hope that LaHaye would get things back in perspective and publicly set things straight. We deplore humanism with all of its lies and godless presuppositions. We should fight it where and when we can just as we fight other evils and false doctrines. But no matter which we believe is the more formidable enemy, humanism or the cults, we should not aid one to fight the other.

—GRF

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A group of former Jehovah's Witnesses assembled in Brooklyn recently protesting Watchtower policies. John Bethell Photo

## PROTEST IN BROOKLYN AS WATCHTOWER MARKS CENTENNIAL

Approximately 50 former Jehovah's Witnesses demonstrated in front of the Bethel headquarters waging a four-day hunger strike. The protest took place from September 30 through October 3 and sought to call attention to the Watchtower's organizational totalitarianism and unChristian practices.

Those who gathered, from numerous countries, called themselves the International Freedom of Conscience Demonstrators.

Meanwhile, the Watchtower Society marked its centennial on Oct. 6, 1984. On that date in 1884, founder and first president Charles T. Russell incorporated Zion's Watch Tower and Tract Society in Pittsburgh. Russell first began teaching his doctrines in 1872.

About 45,000 higher-echelon Jehovah's Witnesses from around the world were invited to a three-hour centennial meeting at Three Rivers Stadium in Pittsburgh and a day of business sessions preceding it, a Watchtower official said. The key-note address of the assembly was delivered by the 91-year-old Watchtower President Frederick Franz.

—KAM



## TM GETS COOL RECEPTION IN PHILIPPINES

Followers of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, teacher of Transcendental Meditation, descended upon the Philippines in September in an attempt to bring a "perfect society" to the island nation.

For a month, the meditators entered military bases, government offices and schools, trying to recruit 7,000 people to take up TM and bring peace to this troubled nation. The number 7,000 is believed by the Maharishi to have powerful properties; if that many people gather in one area and take up TM, he teaches, life will improve for all mankind.

The initial peacefulness of the effort gave way to a raging dispute, after a ceremony at the palace of President Ferdinand E. Marcos. Followers of the Maharishi declared Marcos "Founding Father of the Age of Enlightenment" and declared his wife, Imelda, "Founding Mother." The group then took out newspaper advertisements urging Filipinos to "adore" their president.

Then the group took control of the financially ailing University of the East and raised student fears of changes in the curriculum and compulsory attendance at meditation classes. Students

protested and professors scoffed at the meditators' "technology" for peace.

Followers of the Maharishi have tried their technique in other countries. In 1978, for example, teams were sent to Nicaragua and Iran. In 1979, the governments of both countries were toppled in bloody revolutions. A TM spokesman says that if meditators had stayed in both countries longer than they did, the transitions could have been made with less bloodshed.

—KAM



## KIMBALL ATTENDS MORMON CONFERENCE

Spencer Kimball, the 89-year-old leader of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, surprised Mormons by attending the opening day of the church's 154th semiannual conference in Salt Lake City on Oct. 6, 1984.

Kimball, considered by Mormons to be a prophet of God, has been in poor health for several years. He did not speak at the conference. Marion G. Romney, Kimball's first counselor, did not attend the session. Romney, 87, also has been in ill health for several years.

Outside the Mormon Tabernacle, members of the Unification Church passed out literature supportive of the Mormons. LDS leaders joined other religious organizations in filing "friend of the court" briefs in support of Unification Church leader Sun Myung Moon during his recent trial on income tax-evasion charges.

—KAM



## RUCKMAN ACCUSES GOD OF MISLEADING

Peter Ruckman, who teaches that the King James Version of the Bible is inspired, and goes so far as to say it corrects the original Hebrew and Greek, now says that God intentionally misleads people with obscure statements in Scripture. He says on page 11 of his book *Problem Texts*:

"The teaching therefore that the Bible is not allowed to be misleading is a Satanic teaching in itself. If it is misleading in some places, it is because God intended for someone to be misled if he got too high and mighty in dealing with the Book."

Ruckman then says that God intentionally made Acts 2:38 appear to teach that salvation comes through baptism. He does not mention that the Greek text clears up any difficulty in the English, since he believes the English is inerrant. He says of the verse:

"If this is confusing, unintelligible, incredible, or impossible, misleading, garbled, or obscure, it is because the truth of God recorded in a book is designed to destroy or save the reader, depending upon his attitude towards it."

While it is acknowledged that God acts in judgment against those who reject his love and authority (Romans 1:24-26), this is not what Ruckman is saying. The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 2:11 that God judges those who accept the Antichrist and reject Christ. This is quite different from saying that God allows confusing translation of Scripture just to mislead unbelievers. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie."

—GRF

# Maranatha Campus Ministries

## GOD'S GREEN BERETS?

by Steve Cannon

Cults ministries are facing a new and troubling phenomenon: Some authentic Christian groups exhibit cultic tendencies. This is causing confusion among Christians.

Many study the cults and then become alarmed when they see the very things that are exposed going on in their own group, such as overly aggressive authority structures (shepherding), exclusivism, subjective theology (using feelings to determine truth), and the use of deliverance from demons as a means of control.

When these teachings surface, questions arise. Parents wonder whether their children are following Jesus or have been seduced into a cult. Such is the case with Maranatha Christian Churches, also known as Maranatha Campus Ministries.

Because of its rapid growth, aggressive proselytizing techniques and, in the opinion of many, questionable theology, many parents and friends of members have been asking questions about the background, teachings and practices of MCC.

It was primarily these questions that brought together a group of cult researchers into an ad hoc committee<sup>1</sup> to evaluate MCC. This writer and the other committee members spent two years interviewing members, ex-members, parents, friends, critics and leaders of MCC. We also listened to teaching tapes, watched videotapes and studied the published material of MCC.<sup>2</sup> Some of the findings of this committee were published in May 1984 as a "Statement of Evaluation Regarding MCC."<sup>3</sup>

A good way to begin a study of MCC is with its history. The Aug. 10, 1984, issue of *Christianity Today* summarizes MCC's brief life:

"MCC was founded in 1972 by Robert Weiner, who serves as President. Weiner was reared in a legalistic church home. As a young man, he dropped out of Trinity College in Deerfield, Illinois, to join the Air Force. There he became a Christian through the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. He and his wife, Rose, have since dedicated their lives to reaching young people with the Gospel."

"In 12 years, Weiner's organization has grown from a single ministry at Murray State University in Kentucky to some 100 campus chapters in the United States and in 16 foreign countries" (pp. 38, 39).

As the name change indicates, MCC has evolved from a "campus ministry" into an organization of churches. Although members of the ad hoc committee were told by MCC leaders that each campus "church" is autonomous, charges are still being made that a strict authority structure exists and MCC is basically a shepherding organization.<sup>4</sup>

Former MCC pastor Bobby Bonner reported that he was told by Weiner – who sees himself as an apostle<sup>5</sup> – and Joe Smith who is advertised as a prophet of the church – that "you can leave or do it our way."<sup>6</sup>

Ex-member Kathy Myatt said: "In Maranatha, members are assigned personal shepherds [also known as counselors, disciples, overseers, etc.] to serve as their 'Watchmen' ... they are responsible for the growth and well-being of their disciple and accomplish their task by their good example, by reproof and deliverance from demonic oppression and by confirming God's will for the life of their disciple."<sup>7</sup>

Myatt believes that "loss of personal freedom is the result of this kind of authority."<sup>8</sup> Early in the group's history, MCC members were required to sign a statement of commitment. This document admonished committed members to obey their immediate leaders (elders) as they would God. Even though the original and revised commitment statements are no longer used, recent ex-members still speak of strict control exercised over members.

Along with the charges of control come the allegations that MCC members are taught that they are in God's elite ministry. "We were taught that, true, other churches are in the body of Christ, but no one had the type of total commitment that we did. It would be said almost in the same breath that we were not to have pride, we're only the little toe on the left foot of the Body, and then we would be told that MCC is the Green Berets of the Church, the cutting edge of the sword, crack troops."<sup>9</sup>

"Other Christians could conceivably fellowship with us, but they had such a lower revelation of God that it was rhetorically asked, 'How can two walk together who do not share the same vision?' ... After all, we were told by God in a prophecy that we were His end-time army, the Green Beret of His Army, in fact."<sup>10</sup>

This type of elitism can lead people to believe that if for some reason they want to leave the group, they are somehow miss-

ing out on God's will. There is evidence that this is indeed happening with MCC. A top Maranatha official, Joe Smith, "prophesied over me," Bonner recalled. "He said, 'You will be destroyed because you want to leave.'" Others who tried to leave Maranatha "have been told if you leave, you're going to be out of God's will, you're going to be out of the elect of God," Banner said.<sup>11</sup>

The question that arises most often from parents of MCC members is "How can a group with such obvious zeal for the Lord seem to get mixed up with such questionable tactics?"

It is this writer's opinion that questionable tactics follow questionable theology, and questionable theology is formulated by faulty Bible interpretation. This was one of the main concerns of the ad hoc committee and was stated in the final report:

"Although MCC seeks to regard the Bible as their final authority, there are some teachings and practices, such as receiving personal 'revelations' (i.e., a 'word from the Lord' regarding a doctrinal point or point of practice), which could, in effect, negate this affirmation. Even though MCC has repeatedly stated that such 'revelations' ('words') are to be tested by Scripture, and cannot go against the clear teaching of Scripture, our concern has been that MCC's use of a 'subjective' hermeneutic is insufficient to effectively test the truth of a "subjective" revelation, because both are subjectively derived. Thus, it appears to us that there is at least the potential for the final authority to rest more with the 'revelations' of MCC leaders than the Bible."<sup>12</sup>

An example of this can be seen in one of Bob and Rose Weiner's doctrinal books, *Bible Studies for the Preparation of the Bride* (pp. 227-228). After citing 26 Scripture passages containing the word "lightning," the Weiners draw this conclusion: "Lightning is the anointed word of God going forth from the mouth of the saints." And how was this conclusion drawn? "It took two weeks to receive this revelation. It took reading and re-reading the Scriptures, it took much meditation and waiting on the Lord. When the revelation came, it was life and gave much understanding and imparted much faith."

The problem that materializes is that if the leaders of MCC get a "revelation" from

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# ***WATCHING OUT FOR***

## ***WATCHMAN NEE***

Many Christians uncritically accept the writings of Watchman Nee even though few know anything about his background. Many are impressed by the volume of his work and the dogmatism and feeling of deep spirituality that characterize his writings. His ideas and books still influence charismatics, fundamentalists and people in between.

But one need not be a theologian to discover that his teachings call for scrutiny and caution by Christians. Much can be learned about Nee from a cursory reading of some of his books and the writings of others who were around him. These show that his theology developed through encounters with four different people and it was from these that he "borrowed" ideas extensively. Each new book seemed to develop from "discoveries" received from these teachers.

Nee's basic writings cover over 40 volumes and have been researched by Dana Roberts. His findings are not flattering to Nee and are presented in his book *Understanding Watchman Nee*. This writer is indebted to Roberts for much of the material in this article.

Nee was born Nee Shi-Tsu in November 1903. His mother, a Methodist mission convert, later changed his name to "Bellringer," or Watchman, with all the Christian connotations. He claimed conversion to Christianity in April 1920. At a Bible school in Shanghai, he came under the influence of a female teacher, Miss Yu. Under her instruction he seriously sought a "second blessing." He later said he felt he had "recovered" truth for the church and taught four subsequent experiences after conversion.

Miss Yu directed Nee to Miss M.E. Barber, who taught him in the Keswick concept of the filling of the Spirit. In February 1922, Nee claimed, he was "baptized in the Spirit" and put himself under the continuing instruction of Barber. Barber then was responsible for the development of Nee's perfectionistic theology. Barber also convinced Nee of the truth of the "partial rapture" theory assigning carnal believers to a kind of Protestant purgatory. Nee admitted that in his writings on the book of Revelation, he depended on a book from Barber's library by Robert Gonet that teaches a partial rapture. Thus we see how he got these new "insights" that became the basis for new books.

by Rev. G. Richard Fisher

Later, Barber allowed Nee to read the works of Jesse Penn Lewis when she thought he was "mature enough," Roberts says. Penn Lewis, a mystic with a Welsh Methodist background, saw many parts to man's inner nature. Her literature, considered "holiness literature," is the main source for Nee's *Spiritual Man* series, in which he developed a gnostic view of man, Roberts says. Nee also got doses of Catholic mysticism through the writings of Madame Jeanne Guyon, as published in Penn Lewis' magazine.

Nee continued to read widely and when Barber exposed him to the writings of John Darby, he found the basis for his ecclesiology, or thoughts on the church. From that point, everything Nee wrote on the church is easily identified with the teachings of the Plymouth Brethren. He rejected clergy as unscriptural.

During this time Nee also professed to be led by inner leadings. He justified this subjective means of revelation by saying that the ways of God are not known by external means but by "internal registrations." Again, he was rejecting external authority.

Nee had his own eclectic system developed when he encountered another woman in 1935. Elizabeth Fischbacker introduced him to Pentecostal theology and speaking in tongues. Nee did not regard tongues as unbiblical but never spoke in tongues himself.

In 1942, Nee took over the running of his brother George's chemical factory. He consigned all the property to the church and sought to have the church members as the factory workers. As a result he contradicted previous positions he had taken regarding disassociation of the church and business. In 1949, Mao-Tse Tung came to power and Communist China was born. Nee, a factory owner, was seen as an imperialist and eventually was jailed. He remained in prison until his death in 1972.

The teachings that developed over Nee's lifetime and out of his encounters with these women and the teachings they directed him to are dangerous to Christians seeking clear guidelines to follow. Space allows a listing of only a few of the problems in Nee's teachings.

- Nee outlines no method of Bible study and interpretation and appears to deny evangelical hermeneutics. In his book *Spiritual Authority*, he sets himself and his elders up as the unquestionable authorities. By all appearances, Nee saw himself not as a servant but as a guru.

One gets the impression from Nee that the Bible was not nearly as important as Christians generally consider it. In his book *The Ministry of God's Word*, Nee says, Words alone cannot be considered God's Word." In this book, Nee becomes very philosophical, mystical and incoherent. He says that only as we deliver the Word in terms of the "reality behind it," using what he calls "Holy Spirit memory" and "presenting the pictures as well as speaking the words" will the words be correct; otherwise they are not real.

- Nee overemphasizes emotions. In *The Ministry of God's Word*, he claims that the effectiveness of a preacher's delivery is a product of his emotions. If a preacher does not feel emotionally charged in delivery, "The Spirit is stuck" and the "Spirit is inevitably arrested," Nee says. He continued, "The Spirit flows through the channel of emotion." Then he arrives at a strange conclusion: "Nose in the Scripture stands for feeling. Smelling is a most delicate act, man's feeling is most delicate." Therefore, Nee says, a preacher in speaking needs to "mix feelings with the words spoken, else his words are dead. If our feeling lags behind, or words are stripped of the spirit." To say as Nee does, on page 210, that the Holy Spirit only rides on feeling is dangerous.

- Nee uses terms imprecisely. One example is his writing about a minister's receiving "revelations" in his "Holy Spirit memory" and those revelations being remembered in us by the Holy Spirit. This sort of metaphysical mumbo jumbo is impossible to understand, since there is no direct scriptural reference to a "Holy Spirit memory."

When a Christian begins to see Nee as a guide in determining the value of other Christian writers, or sees Nee's writings as a key to spirituality, that person is headed for trouble. Nee's presuppositions are suspect in light of the Word of God. His books provide grist for cult groups such as The Way, The Alamo Foundation, the Children of God and other groups. The astute believer should watch out for Watchman Nee. \*

reason to distort such sources, and it is especially heinous when the article quoted was in line with orthodox Christian thinking.

Another egregious misquote comes from the Watchtower pamphlet *The Trinity: Divine Mystery Or Pagan Myth?* In it the writers refer to Alexander Hislop's book *The Two Babylons*<sup>4</sup> as if he agrees with the Watchtower's stand on the Trinity.

A reading of Hislop in full reveals that he believes ancient paganism distorted the true concept of the Trinity and that Catholicism also has corrupted the Trinity by inserting the worship of Mary. On page 18 of *The Two Babylons*, Hislop destroys any logical reason the Witnesses could have in appealing to the book at all. Concerning the pagan trinities he writes:

"All these have existed from ancient times. While overlaid with idolatry, the recognition of a Trinity was universal in all the ancient nations of the world proving, how deep-rooted in the human race was the primeval doctrine on this subject, which comes out so distinctly in Genesis."

On page 90 Hislop further shows the difference between the pagan trinities and the true Trinity:

"Will any one after this say that the Roman Catholic Church must still be called Christian, because it holds the doctrine of the Trinity? So did the Pagan Babylonians, so did the Egyptians, so do the Hindoos at this hour, in the very same sense in which Rome does. They all admitted a trinity, but did they worship THE Triune Jehovah, the King Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible."

In pagan religions, we find polytheism with its belief in many separate gods as Hislop asserts. None of these systems of speculative theology has ever arrived at a trinitarian concept of God. The best we find in these are triads of deities.

In a series of Watchtower articles on the Trinity, which appeared in the magazine's Aug. 1, Aug. 15 and Sept. 1, 1984 issues, the Society's writers once again displayed their penchant for using misquotes, half-truths and misrepresentations in defending their Arian beliefs.

Two clear-cut examples of their technique are found in the Aug. 1 installment. On page 22, the writers cited "the scholarly *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*." In an effort to debunk the Scripture passages referring to the Trinity, they quote the *Theological Dictionary* as stating, "Perhaps recollection of the many triads of the surrounding polytheistic world contributed to the formation of the threefold formulae."

However, an examination of the dictionary shows that the Watchtower writers

have taken the passage out of context. Emphasis falls on the word "Perhaps," as the dictionary continues, "**More likely**, however, is the influence of Jewish models. For in Judaism, as in the early Church, we find triadic formulae, and even formulae with four or more members."<sup>5</sup> Thus, this work maintains that there is stronger evidence that the threefold formula comes from Judaism and the early Church than from surrounding polytheism, as the Watchtower would lead one to believe.

Another distortion is found in this same article as the writers again quote the *Theological Dictionary*, maintaining that "in a footnote, this work says that in the apocryphal Gospel of the Hebrews, the spirit (feminine gender in Hebrew and Aramaic) 'is regarded as the mother of Jesus' and adds: 'Thus we have the common family triad of antiquity, i.e., father, mother and son.'" In a further effort to paganize the Tri-unity of God, the Watchtower writers have carefully omitted from their quote of the footnote these significant words: "Here [in the Gospel of the Hebrews] the Spirit is feminine in the sense of the Heb. *ruach*, and in **plain contradiction of the NT** is regarded as the mother of Jesus."<sup>6</sup>

While the Watchtower regards this work as the "scholarly *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*" it ignores the specific assertion that the Christology of the New Testament is carried to its logical conclusion with the thoroughgoing designation of Christ as Theos (God). The article backs up this assertion by quoting specific New Testament passages where Christ is called God, as well as the statement of the Roman official Pliny in A.D. 111 that the Christians in his territory met before dawn and sang a hymn to Christ as God and that Christ is called God on several early inscriptions in Syria and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> Further, the Watchtower cites no volume or page references to its quotations. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* by Gerhard Kittel contains 10 volumes and has well over 9,000 pages. The Watchtower's omission of volume and page numbers serves well to discourage Witness and non-Witness alike from examining the quotations.

The Watchtower writers also misquote *Encyclopædia Britannica*. On page 23 of *The Watchtower's* Aug. 1 article, the encyclopedia is quoted as stating: "The question as to how to reconcile the encounter with God in this threefold figure with faith in the oneness of God, which was the Jews' and Christians' characteristic mark of distinction over against paganism, agitated the piety of ancient Christendom in the deepest way. It also provided the strongest impetus for a speculative theology – an impetus that inspired Western metaphysics [philosophy] throughout the centuries."

The Watchtower then comments: "Yes, the Trinitarian 'unknown God' of Christen-

dom is a product of theological speculation and philosophy."

However, the context once again reveals the misrepresentations on the Watchtower's part. The encyclopedia states in full:

"**The basis for the doctrine of the Trinity.** The Christian doctrine of the Trinity has its ultimate foundation in the special religious experience of the Christians in the first communities. This basis of experience is older than the doctrine of the Trinity. It consisted of the fact that God came to meet Christians in a threefold figure: (1) as Creator, Lord of the history of salvation, Father, and Judge, who revealed himself in the Old Testament; (2) as the Lord, who, in the figure of Jesus Christ, lived among men and was present in their midst as the 'Resurrected One'; and (3) as the Holy Spirit, whom they experienced as the power of the new life, the miraculous potency of the Kingdom of God. The question as to how to reconcile the encounter with God in this threefold figure with faith in the oneness of God, which was the Jews' and Christians' characteristic mark of distinction over against paganism, agitated the piety of ancient Christendom in the deepest way. It also provided the strongest impetus for a speculative theology – an impetus that inspired Western metaphysics throughout the centuries. In the first two centuries a series of different answers to this question stood in juxtaposition; at first none of them was thought speculative."<sup>8</sup>

Thus the encyclopedia says the Christian doctrine of the Trinity "has its ultimate foundation in the special religious experiences of the Christians in the first communities." This contradicts Watchtower thought that the triune nature of God is a third-century invention.

Numerous books have traced the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup> As hard as it is to comprehend, Jesus accepted worship, took titles of deity, forgave sins and exercised all the prerogatives of God. If He were not God, we would only say He was promoting idolatry. But the teaching of Jesus was Trinitarian throughout and His deity was recognized by the Apostle Thomas, who said, "My Lord and my God."<sup>10</sup>

We cannot follow an organization that piles more lies on top of an old heresy. We should look to the writing of tried and true expositors of Scripture. Lorraine Boettner, in his book *Studies in Theology*, gives a fine exposition of the Trinity:

"The tri-personality of God is exclusively a truth of revelation, and one which lies outside the realm of natural reason. ... none of the pagan religions, nor any of the systems of speculative philosophy have ever arrived at a

(continued on page 7)

trinitarian conception of God. ... we are faced with this dilemma: either the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must be true, or the Scriptures are self-contradictory; either the Scriptures recognize more Gods than one, or Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is that one God. ... Hence our primary reason for believing the doctrine of the Trinity is as, we have stated elsewhere, not because of any general tendency of human thinking to go in that direction, nor because of any analogies in nature, but only because it is a clearly revealed doctrine of the Bible. For those who accept the authority of the Scriptures the evidence is conclusive."<sup>11</sup>

Among his other points are that in

Oriental thinking, sonship conveys the idea of the sameness of nature. Christians would do well to seek out this book and study it. The Church's doctrine of the Trinity is no pagan idea and proper Bible interpretation will support it fully.

#### ENDNOTES:

1. Jeremy C. Jackson, *No Other Foundation, The Church Through Twenty Centuries*, Cornerstone Books, Westchester, Ill., 1980.
2. B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, William Eerdmans Pub., Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1951, pp. 29-33.
3. Archibald Robertson, *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., n.d.
4. Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, N.J., 1959.

5. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans Pub., Co., Vol. 3, pg. 108 (emphasis added).
6. *Ibid.*, (emphasis added).
7. *Ibid.*, pg. 106.
8. *New Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 4, pg. 485.
9. Stanley Rosenthal, *The Tri-Unity of God in the Old Testament*, Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry Inc., West Collingswood, N.J., 1978.
10. John 20:28.
11. Lorraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology*, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1973, pp. 79, 80, 87, 93. See also pages 161-172, "The Attributes of Deity are Ascribed to Christ." For an examination and expose of the Jehovah's Witnesses see Edmond C. Gruss' *Apostles of Denial*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. See also Warren Wiersbe's *Be Confident*, Scripture Press (pp. 21-24) for an excellent explanation of terms such as "first-born" and "father's right hand." \*

## MARANATHA

(from page 4)

God as to the particular meaning of a Scripture passage – and it is assumed by them that all these "revelations" come from God – then that must be the final word. If the Scripture is then interpreted by this "revelation," the "revelation" stands above the Scripture and it is in these "words from the Lord" that the final authority rests. This way of thinking has in the past with other groups brought serious doctrinal error into the Body of Christ. The impact of this type of subjective hermeneutics must not be overlooked.

After study of published and unpublished doctrinal works by MCC leaders, some serious concerns have arisen. Space does not permit a detailed examination of each one, but one that is considered by this writer to have the most serious implications will be examined.

MCC teaches in *Bible Studies on the Overcoming Life* that unregenerate man has Satan's nature, but takes on God's nature when he becomes a true Christian.<sup>13</sup> MCC's Joe Smith says:

"It was His [Jesus'] Spirit that was made that way for our spirit and now it is His Spirit that enters into our spirits and imparts the divine nature and character of God right into our lives. For example, it's like if you take metal, you take iron, and you put them in the fire, and you leave the iron sitting in the fire. The fire begins to penetrate the iron and pretty soon the iron begins to glow with the fire. And so then you have the iron in the fire and the fire in the iron. They become co-mingled. Now in the same way ... we are in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit in us. We are becoming co-mingled; we are becoming one. So when you begin to realize this, that you are one with Him and this is what Jesus was saying in verse 20: In that day, you will know that I am in my Father, and you in Me and I in you.

He's talking about being co-mingled. He's talking about us becoming one."<sup>14</sup>

In addition, Weiner says:

"The Body of Christ will not birth weak 'namby-pamby Christians,' but will bring to birth a race of God-men and women – burning brands of fire who are so radically committed to holiness and belief of the truth that they will rise up and tear down the strongholds of the enemy, and take over the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."<sup>15</sup>

The result is a doctrine that exalts the believer to the position of God-man. This seems to set the believer up to see himself in an exaggerated position in the body of Christ and can lead to spiritual elitism.<sup>16</sup> In the words of one ex-member of Maranatha, "Members are constantly driven by an elitist mentality, the idea that 'we' are chosen, and alone are 'moving on' with a special market on revelation."<sup>17</sup>

The doctrines and practices mentioned above, as well as others, are raising legitimate questions about MCC. In meetings, telephone conversations and correspondence, these questions and concerns have been presented to MCC leaders and their theological advisers. These leaders have candidly responded to me and others that there have been problems with their ministries in the past.<sup>18</sup> Many of their doctrinal books have been recently revised, and according to Weiner they have been brought up to "perfect theological standards."<sup>19</sup> However, it appears to this writer that the changes and reforms of MCC are cosmetic and do not strike at the heart of expressed concerns. Without proof of more substantial changes, this writer will have to repeat the conclusion of the ad hoc committee researching MCC and state: "Until we have clearer understanding of the changes which MCC claims are being implemented and until we see more discernible evidence of change in the lives of people being impacted by MCC, we would not recommend this organization to anyone."<sup>20</sup>

#### ENDNOTES:

1. This committee was established at a meeting with National MCC leaders in Santa Barbara, Calif., in November 1982 and was composed of representatives of several cult research organizations at the request of MCC. With the publication of a Statement of Evaluation in May 1984, this committee officially disbanded.
2. To date, MCC has published a series of five Bible Study Guides. All five were written by Bob and Rose Weiner.
3. Copies of this statement may be obtained by sending a business-size, self-addressed, stamped envelope to PFO Southwest, P.O. Box 30073, Phoenix, AZ 85046.
4. For a detailed examination of the Shepherd-ing Movement, see PFO Newsletter, Volume 3, Number 2, April-June, 1983.
5. Sherry Andrews, "Maranatha Ministries," *Charisma Magazine*, May 1982, pg. 25.
6. Lisa Ellis, "Maranathas gather in Dallas under cloud of cult allegations," *Dallas Times Herald*, Sept. 4, 1984, pg. 15A.
7. Alan and Kathy Myatt, *A Critique of the Beliefs and Practices of Maranatha Campus Ministries*, published by author, January 1983, pg. 32.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Ex-MCC member, tape on file.
10. Personal testimony, letter of Kathy Myatt, no date, pg. 7.
11. "Maranathas gather ...," op. cit., pg. 15A.
12. "Ad hoc committee, *A Statement of Evaluation Regarding Maranatha Campus Ministries/Maranatha Christian Ministries/Maranatha Christian Church*, no publisher, May 1984, pg. 4.
13. Bob and Rose Weiner, *Bible Studies on the Overcoming Life*, Maranatha Publications, Gainesville, Fla., n.d.; typed revision manuscript of Series 2, Studies 2 and 3.
14. Joe Smith, tape, *Who We Are in Christ*.
15. Bob Weiner, *Getting Back to the Basics*, n.d., no publisher, pg. 6.
16. Neil J. Duddy and the Spiritual Counterfeits Project, *The God Men*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 1981. See Chapter 3.
17. Charles Moeller, ex-member of Maranatha, *Open Letter*, April 18, 1983, pg. 1.
18. Statement issued by Spiritual Counterfeits Project following conference in Santa Barbara, Calif., on Nov. 20, 1982, Point #1.
19. Randy Frame, "A Team of Cult Watchers Challenges a Growing Campus Ministry," *Christianity Today*, Aug. 10, 1984, pg. 40.
20. Ad hoc committee, op. cit., pg. 7. \*



# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## DEATH AND THE AFTERLIFE

by Dr. Robert A. Morey,  
Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minn., 1984,  
\$11.95, 315 pages.

When pondering the topics of man's intermediate and final estates, no longer will Christians have to pore over lexicons, dictionaries, books of systematic theology and the writings of the church fathers. Dr. Robert Morey has put it all together in *Death and the Afterlife*.

Morey's explanations of the precise meanings of the terms "body," "soul," "spirit," "sheol," "hades" and "gehenna" are rewarding and mind-stretching. Morey has searched Scripture, intertestamental writings, rabbinic literature and the works of the early Christians to root out these meanings. The products of Morey's search are admirable.

The book thoroughly refutes the two-volume work of Adventist Conditionalist LeRoy Froom. Morey shows that Froom's positions on soul sleep and annihilation are based on partial quotes from Scripture and misuse of the writings of the early church fathers. He picks apart Froom's arguments and, along the way, discusses hermeneutics, universalism and occultism.

The book's topic is deep and the tone is scholarly, but Morey's style and organization keep the discussion within the grasp of the Christian layman without sacrificing scholarship.

Some of the book's finest spots are where little-noticed arguments flow directly from Scripture. For instance, on page 49, he argues:

"The continuing problem of necromancy in Israel's history has been noted by many scholars as clear evidence that the Jews did not believe in soul sleep. Necromancy is the attempt to communicate with the departed conscious souls in Sheol. For example, Saul attempted to contact Samuel's soul

by having the medium of Endor call him up from Sheol (1 Sam. 28:7-25)."

Without getting into the debate of whether or not it was Samuel or a demon who answered the medium at Endor, what is absolutely clear is that Saul believed Samuel was still consciously alive in Sheol. That the King of Israel would believe in an afterlife while the rest of the nation did not is totally unreasonable. While the Old Testament prophets condemned necromancy as something which was "forbidden," they never stated that it was impossible because the dead were unconscious (Deut. 18:9-14). The silence of the Old Testament prophets on this point cannot be explained any other way than to mean that Israel did believe in a conscious afterlife. While they were forbidden to be engaged in seances, they did not believe that man was extinguished at death.

On page 102, Morey writes:

"We must pause at this point and emphasize that nonexistence was not the punishment inflicted on the body and soul of Christ. If the annihilationists were right, then Christ should have disintegrated on the cross and would have ceased to exist in body and soul. However, Christ's body was not annihilated but intact in the tomb while His soul was conscious in Hades."

Since the annihilationists believe that the body and soul of sinners pass into nonexistence either at death or the resurrection and that this is the nature of divine judgment, how do they explain the existence of Christ's body in the tomb?

Morey's book may well become the definitive work on death and the afterlife. Dr. Walter Martin calls this book "the most comprehensive biblical study of the subject in the last half I century." This is not an overstatement. It is a "must read" book for Christians.

—GRF



### \*\*BOOKS IN REVIEW CORRECTION\*\*

In the last issue of PFO's newsletter we incorrectly listed the publisher of Ed Decker and David Hunt's book *The Godmakers* as Vision House. The correct publisher is Harvest House. Our apologies to Harvest House for this error. — Editor



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## NEWSLETTER

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