



Books in Review

KNOWING CHRIST IN THE CHALLENGE OF HERESY

by Steven Tsoukalas

University Press of America, 240 pages, \$24.50

It's not too unusual or difficult to find a good book that expounds on the deity of Jesus Christ. Since Christ's divine nature is the very bedrock of the Christian faith, it is a subject that has been thoroughly defended. However, the vast majority of these volumes establish only the biblical testimony for the doctrine, they do not specifically respond to heretical teachings surrounding the person of Christ.

As the Church enters a new millennium, polished campaigns against the deity of Jesus proliferate at an accelerated rate at the hands of cults and aberrant sects. With the body of Christ facing these new "challenges of heresy," volumes which answer the false christologies are not only welcome, but sorely needed.

The latest book by Steven Tsoukalas is one of the finest treatises of the subject for those wishing to study the deity of Christ by way of comparing what the Scriptures state against the backdrop of cultic teaching. Tsoukalas provides for the reader a virtual catalog of erroneous christologies. All the major challengers are detailed, such as the Latter-day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International and the New Age movement. Additionally, sometimes overlooked, sects also are examined because of their repudiation of the deity of Christ in less subtle forms. These groups include the Word-Faith movement, United Pentecostal Church, liberal Protestantism and others. Still other, non-Christian religious bodies, such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism are also briefly studied.

Tsoukalas examines not only the nature of Christ as the "Incarnate Deity," but explores the "Pre-existent Deity" as well. His is a volume packed to help equip every believer. One will even find a secondary wealth of information conveniently placed in many of his expounded footnotes. As in any scholarly treatment, Tsoukalas does not pass over citing New Testament Greek grammar. But when he does present it, it is done in a way that is not beyond the grasp of the lay person.

General (topical) and Scriptural indexes are provided and make for easy retrieval of the information.

In a day when the Church has lost a passion for doctrine and developed an attitude of apathy toward the cults, Tsoukalas reminds us that God can use heresy and challenges us with these words:

"I hope that the reader may know Christ better, as was the case with myself. I was challenged by heresy to formulate my understanding of Christ. As I searched the Scriptures to answer attacks, something much more than mere refutation occurred. I worshiped Him more adoringly. I grew to love Him more as I read about Him and studied the biblical passages."

—MKG

WITCHCRAFT

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF WICCA

by Craig Hawkins

Baker Book House, 226 pages, \$15.99

Christians looking for a resource to help them respond to witchcraft, Wicca and neopaganism now have one, thanks to a detailed, apologetic approach in apologist Craig Hawkins' thorough research.

His stated objectives in the Introduction are to:

- provide an understanding of contemporary witchcraft and clear up much of the confusion Christians have concerning what witches believe and practice;
- analyze and critique contemporary witchcraft from biblical, logical, metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical perspectives; and
- facilitate and encourage biblical and thoughtful evangelism of witches as well as other neopagans and occultists in general (pg. 17).

He succeeds admirably.

Most Christians mistakenly think that Satanism and witchcraft are the same thing. They also think that witchcraft is monolithic when in fact it is an eclectic bag of subjective and contradictory views. Those nuances are handled clearly and precisely by Hawkins. He helps us see the confusing and eclectic nature of modern witchcraft. This book is solid, not sensationalistic.

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The quatrain was, in recent years, one of his most widely discussed prophecies and generated extensive speculation and enthusiasm among his followers. One interpreter defined the revelation as: "In this gloomy prediction, Nostradamus seems to foresee the end of the world at the Millennium, the year 2000." Another claims that, "A tremendous world revolution is foretold to take place in the year 1999, ... Nostradamus shows his mystic knowledge of the great secret of the book of revelations and solves for us the identify of the 'Beast of the Apocalypse' and the time of his arrival which John of Patmos (Rev. XIII:18) records."

Despite variation in the exact details of what was to occur as provided by his interpreter, one element was firm — the cataclysmic events would take place in July 1999. One writer even added to the mystique by noting that when one inverts the last three digits of the year (1999) it is "the number of the beast" (666) found in Revelation (13:18).

As is now known, July 1999 came and passed without the fulfillment of Nostradamus' prophecy. What did come to pass, however, was *once again* confirmation that his gift of prophecy was not from the Lord. "If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22). July was not the crowning moment for Nostradamus, but yet another reason for Christians to avoid him and his prophecies and get back to the safe and sure Word of God.

—MKG

BOOKS IN REVIEW

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The three main sections of the book are: The Contemporary World of Witchcraft, The Biblical View of Contemporary Witchcraft and Philosophical Critiques of Witchcraft.

There is an index for persons, a subject index and a Scripture index, which make the book even more valuable. Hawkins has included helpful sections in the book on the motives for witchcraft and how the witches' world is set up — with its practices, calender and accoutrements.

This book is a well-documented "who's who" of contemporary paganism — an up-to-date handbook on witchcraft. Given the modern revival of interest in Wicca and attempts to make it respectable, this book is a must for anyone wanting a handle on our times. It could serve as an inoculation for our churches and young people.

This book is scholarly but not technical. It will satisfy the student who wants insights into the Hebrew and Greek text but is written in such a way as to be easily grasped by the average reader.

We are grateful for Craig Hawkins, for his research and for his help in equipping the Church with tools and weapons for the contemporary battle. We need to see the gaping holes in the witchcraft worldview. This book helps us do that very thing.

—GRF

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.