



Reachout Trust is an international Christian ministry that equips the church, upholds evangelical biblical truth and builds bridges to people in the cults, occult and new age.

*We aim to:*

Examine in the light of the Christian gospel the beliefs and spirituality of people within the cults, occult, new age and all not upholding evangelical biblical truth.

Train and equip Christians to explain the Christian gospel in a relevant way.

Provide a complete service of advice and help to all enquirers.

Present the Christian gospel.

Work with organisations who will help achieve these aims.

A detailed information pack that shows how you can be involved in this ministry is available from head office.

All unassigned articles are the responsibility of Doug Harris, Director of Reachout Trust.

Other articles may not necessarily represent the Trustees' belief in every small detail.

Requests to reprint articles, in any form, must be made in writing to the Richmond Office.

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# CELEBRATING 22 YEARS OF MINISTRY REACHOUT QUARTERLY

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## A Listening Ear

Chinese whispers can be a fun party game but it does demonstrate how important it is to listen carefully to what someone else says.

One of the most famous changes of a sentence was sent by a commander during the war and what he actually said was, "Send me reinforcements we are going to advance." However it ended up as, "Send me three and four pence we are going to a dance!"

This may be an apocryphal story but it again shows the need not just to listen but to do so carefully so we really understand what is being said to us.

A few years ago the then Midland Bank advertised itself as the 'Listening Bank' and if such a commercial enterprise sought to do that how much more should a ministry such as ourselves

We recently were sent a proposed paper concerning changes to the way Voluntary Organisations work and in there we have an interesting definition of performance improvement,

"Improvement in an organisation's actions in fulfilling its aims and objectives for the maximum benefit of its service users and the cause."

We would certainly want to be such a ministry and

believe that we have already begun taking steps with a survey form on our web site and a questionnaire in this Quarterly. Please would you take the time to fill in one or both of these.

It might also be good here to let everyone know what our aims and objectives are so that you have opportunity to input into whether you feel we are fulfilling them to the maximum benefit of our users.

1. Examine in the light of the evangelical Christian gospel the beliefs and spirituality of people within the cults, occult and new age and all not upholding biblical truth.
2. Train and equip Christians to explain and share the evangelical Christian gospel in a relevant way.
3. Provide a complete service of advice and help to all enquirers.
4. Teach and share the evangelical Christian gospel.
5. Work with other organisations dedicated to these same aims.

We achieve these aims through several means:

1. Training Christians to be effective witnesses

and advisors to people involved.

2. Providing relevant teaching and resource material for use in training and witnessing.
3. Providing advisors for people wishing to leave the group they are involved with.
4. Providing a general information service on the cults, occult, new age and all groups holding to non-biblical teaching.

If you have a comment to make on a particular area regarding the fulfilment of our aims that is beyond either of the current surveys please do communicate with us, as we are willing to look at every aspect of our ministry.

We have already started taking some action from what people have said to us, for instance the size of the home page on the web site and the fonts we use in the Quarterly. Having checked out research on the matter we are now using in the Quarterly the most popular fonts in readability studies. If you have further comment please let us know.

**(Continued on page 13)**

Page 2 - 20th Convention ~ ~ ~ Page 2 - Diary

Page 3 - Phil Pullman's Subtle Lie

Page 6 - Watch The Tower 2004/1 ~ ~ ~ Page 8- Truth Restored - 38

Page 10 - Apologetics - 17 ~ ~ ~ Page 11 - Apottergetics

Page 14 - Feedback ~ ~ ~ Page 16—Giving



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## WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

### 20th Reachout Annual Convention

12-14 November 2004

Pioneer Centre Cleobury Mortimer - near  
Kidderminster



As this is the 20th Reachout Annual Convention we want to invite all who have attended the other 19 to return to be with us for this special weekend. If this is you please book, or if you know of any who have been please will you pass on the invitation.

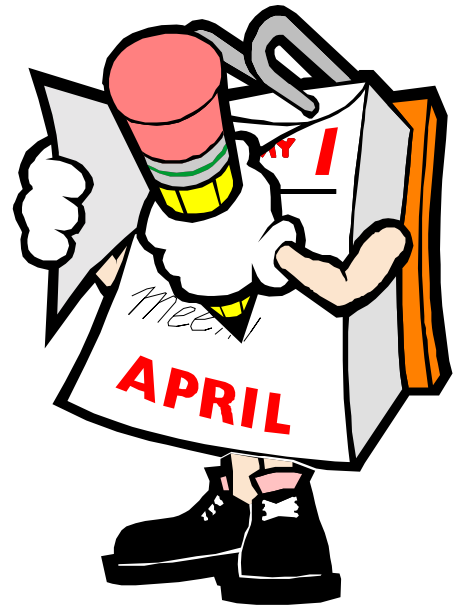
At the same time we also want those who have never been before to attend so that we can prepare and look forward for the next 20 years!

As far as the teaching goes the weekend will include 4 in-depth workshops and 4 seminars - full details will be available in Spring 2004.

Apart from these teaching sessions, there will be other times together for prayer, discussion, singing, testimonies etc. Above all, we will also provide time for the mutual fellowship and encouragement of each other as we feel this is a vital part of the weekend. There will also be a full range of resources for you to purchase.

Accommodation is en-suite. Married couples will obviously have their own rooms but others may need to share up to 4 in a room.

See enclosed brochure for booking details.



## Doug's Diary

Confirmation has been received that Doug Harris will be involved in training at the following seminars.

Other sessions are in the process of being arranged and an updated list can be obtained either on the web site or by ringing Head Office for further details.

Those marked \* may have a restricted attendance.

If there is not a venue near you but you feel that your area would benefit from a seminar, contact Head Office to talk about organising one.

### MARCH

- 13 Woodford
- 14 Dagenham
- 16 Battersea
- 17 Crowhurst \*
- 18 Crowhurst \*
- 20 Worthing
- 28 Birmingham

### MAY

- 9 Lincoln
- 11-14 **CRE - SANDOWN**
- 18 Battersea

### JUNE

- 5-6 Leyland
- 18-20 Liverpool
- 27 Dagenham

# Philip Pullman's Subtle Lie

Ann Thomas

In December 2003 Philip Pullman's *His Darkest Materials* came third in the BBC's Big Read behind *The Lord Of The Rings* and *Pride And Prejudice*. *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire* made up the top five. We therefore feel that this article is very relevant.

When I first read the His Dark Materials trilogy, as an informed adult, I thought it was brilliant. As a Christian I was not offended at all – because it was fantasy. I read a lot of science fiction and fantasy and, like most people, am used to suspending reality and taking my mind into a completely different world where different rules apply. On that basis, I found the premise of the books remarkable and well thought out. You learn and grow along with the characters.

So when I heard there was a monumental fuss about them I was momentarily taken aback. Then I looked at them again. This time I didn't suspend reality and enter another world. This time I compared reality to the world in the books. Now I can see why people are concerned.

This is the crux of the matter. As an informed adult (or teenager) the books can be taken as pure fantasy. They might give us some interesting issues to think about, but they do not describe the real world. But for the unguarded, the familiarity of some of the images can be misleading.

Even young children quickly learn that you can't expect to fly like Peter Pan or get squashed flat and spring back again like in the cartoons. In my experience most children have quite happily separated Harry Potter from the real world and only copy him in their imaginations. They don't have any idea about attempting real witchcraft. But His Dark Materials is different, because it deals with philosophy and religion – ideas.

These books are a perfect example of what happens when you leave God out of life. Men are left to their own resources, and they have no choice but to believe that mankind

can create a better society on their own – what Pullman calls 'the Republic of Heaven'. In order to justify the humanist viewpoint it is necessary to make God and the Church into the 'bad guys', and the heroes are those who triumph over them by their own inner qualities.

Taken on that basis it is a gripping and moving story, well deserving of all the accolades the secular world has given it. However, we need to look at whether Christians should be offended by the way that the books depict God and the Church, and whether we should be concerned that unbelievers will be turned away from the truth by such a clever lie. The Guardian called the first book, *Northern Lights* "a thought-provoking reflection on the human condition."

Before proceeding, I think we need to get things in their proper perspective. For all their popularity, how many people will read these books compared to the enormous amount of other influences that are out in society today? The following comment sums it up well:

Why have so many of us got upset about these books, when television has a far bigger influence and reach and many of the same issues are found there? More children will be exposed more regularly to the "theology" of Buffy, the negative portrayal of the church in Eastenders and the sexual morality of the pre-teen magazines than will ever read even the best-selling HP books let alone the rather highbrow (ie fat!) and rather good, if disturbing, Pullman trilogy. "How Are They Reading?", (website of The Church of England Diocese of Chelmsford)

## The Story

The first book, *Northern Lights*, is set in a world very similar to our own, but very obviously different. It concerns a young, orphan girl called Lyra who grew up in a college in Oxford. Children start disappearing all over the country, including Lyra's friend Roger, and she stumbles on a group going to the north looking for their children, and goes with them.

She has many adventures and meets many people, including the wicked Mrs Coulter, who turns out to be her mother, and the daring Lord Asriel, who turns out to be her father. The children are eventually rescued and Lyra follows Lord Asriel as he succeeds in creating a bridge between their world and another, through the Aurora Borealis – the Northern Lights.

The opening of the bridge creates a great disturbance in nature and the second book, *The Subtle Knife*, finds Lyra in the other world looking for Lord Asriel, who doesn't know she has followed him. There she meets Will, a boy of her age from our world. He had found a window between the two worlds and is looking for his father, who disappeared on a polar expedition when Will was born.

Will becomes the bearer of the 'subtle knife', which is able to cut through anything, including the fabric between the worlds. Lyra finds out through the alethiometer, a 'truth meter' she is able to read, that she must help Will in his search, and they have many adventures together. The book ends with Will finding his father, who tells him he must take the knife to Lord Asriel who is preparing for a great war.

Through both these books runs the theme of the mystery of Dust. It is an elementary particle, like electrons, and collects invisibly around adults from the age of puberty onwards. Children attract very little Dust. Lord Asriel discovered that Dust fell from the sky at the Northern Lights, through the gap into the other world. It is also discovered that Dust is intelligent and is communicating with Lyra through her alethiometer.

The Church in Lyra's world is very like our medieval Catholic Church, with politics and power being its main goals. The Church is afraid that Dust is the physical evidence for original sin, and is conducting research and experiments (often unethical) to learn more about it. Mrs Coulter works for the Church, but for her own

ends and as long as it suits her.

However, there is very little reference to the Church or theology in the first two books. They are mainly rip-roaring adventure stories in which we see the characters of Will and Lyra tested, and the other main players defined.

It is not until the third book, *The Amber Spyglass*, that the 'theology' is spelled out, as the reason for Lord Asriel's war is made clear. The Authority, who calls himself God, is not the creator of the universe at all but simply the first of all the angels, who has taken power on himself to rule everything. The Authority considers that conscious beings of every kind have become dangerously independent, and plans to set up a permanent inquisition in every world. And the first thing he will do is destroy the republic that Lord Asriel is building. That is why Lord Asriel is preparing for war.

The third book centres on two separate stories – Lord Asriel's war against the Authority, and Mary Malone's relationship with creatures in another world and her discoveries about Dust. Mary Malone is an ex-nun turned scientist from our world, researching dark matter in the universe – which she finds out is Dust when she meets Lyra. In the world of the mulefa she builds the Amber Spyglass with which she can see Dust. She discovers that the Dust is streaming away at an ever-increasing rate, and without Dust everything will come to an end.

Meanwhile, in Lyra's world, there is a prophecy that she will be the second Eve, and what she does will determine the fate of everyone. Believing that she will fall like the first Eve, the Church determines to kill her before she falls. Since they believe Dust is original sin, if they destroy that too, the whole universe will be freed from sin. They do not realise what Dust really is, and that Dust is essential to life.

In many a science fiction or fantasy book, religions and beliefs have been invented as literary devices to serve the plot. This could be argued to be the case with *His Dark Materials*. However, Philip Pullman is on record as saying "I've got no evidence whatever for believing in a God... maybe there is a God out there. All I know is that if there is, he hasn't shown himself on earth. But going further than that, I would

say that those people who claim that they do know that there is a God have found this claim of theirs the most wonderful excuse for behaving extremely badly. So belief in a God does not seem to me to result automatically in behaving very well." (*The Mail on Sunday*, 27 January 2002, p.63). He went even further later in the same article to say "... wherever you see organised religion and priesthoods and power, you see cruelty and tyranny and repression. It's almost a universal law." (*Ibid.*) Yet he was raised largely by his grandfather, who was a clergyman. He went to church and Sunday school, and gained a faith in God and the Bible from his grandfather.

It seems clear from *His Dark Materials*, that Philip Pullman has not just invented a religion and a God, but deliberately twisted what he knows of Christianity to the worst viewpoint.

## God

Since Philip Pullman no longer believes in God, he has created a character in his books, who claims to be God, but actually isn't. All the awful things he has to say about "The Authority" are not slurs against God, they are descriptions of someone who is not God:

Balthamos said quietly, "The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were all names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves – the first angel, true, the most powerful, but he was formed of Dust as we are, and Dust is only a name for what happens when matter begins to understand itself, and Dust is formed. The first angels condensed out of Dust, and the Authority was the first of all. He told those who came after him that he had created them, but it was a lie. One of those who came later was wiser than he was, and she found out the truth, so he banished her. We serve her still. And the Authority still reigns in his kingdom, and Metatron is his Regent." (*The Amber Spyglass* p.33-34)

So 'God' is an angel who usurped power over everyone else. He also has none of the characteristics of God. For example, he is not found to be "the same yesterday, today and forever", but has aged over the millennia.

"Well, where is God," said Mrs

Coulter, "if he's alive? And why doesn't he speak any more? At the beginning of the world, God walked in the garden and spoke with Adam and Eve. Then he began to withdraw, and Moses only heard his voice. Later, in the time of Daniel, he was aged – he was the Ancient of Days. Where is he now? Is he still alive, at some inconceivable age, decrepit and demented, unable to think or act, or speak, a rotten hulk? And if that is his condition, wouldn't it be the most merciful thing, the truest proof of our love for God, to seek him out and give him the gift of death?" (*The Amber Spyglass* p.344)

Near the end of the final book, the Authority dies. This is not a shocking sin, because he is not God, remember? He eventually is found to be a decrepit and fearful old man, unable to cope with life any longer. Since angels condense out of Dust, he finally cannot hold himself together any more, and dissolves:

She was gazing into the crystal litter. It was unbroken, although the crystal was stained and smeared with mud and the blood of what the cliff-ghasts had been eating before they found it. It lay tilted crazily among the rocks, and inside it –

"Oh, Will, he's still alive! But – the poor thing..."

Will saw her hands pressing against the crystal, trying to reach to the angel and comfort him; because he was so old, and he was terrified, crying like a baby and cowering away into the lowest corner.

"He must be so old – I've never seen anyone suffering like that – oh, Will, can't we let him out?"

Will cut through the crystal in one movement and reaching in to help the angel out. Demented and powerless, the aged being could only weep and mumble in fear and pain and misery, and he shrank away from what seemed like yet another threat.

"It's all right," Will said, "we can help you hide, at least. Come on, we won't hurt you..."

Between them they helped the ancient of days out of his crystal cell; it wasn't hard, for he was as light as paper, and he would have followed them anywhere, having no will of his own, and responding to simple kindness like a flower to the sun. But in the open air there was nothing to stop the wind from damaging him, and to their dismay his form began to loosen and dissolve. Only a few moments later he had vanished completely, and their last impression

was of those eyes, blinking in wonder, and a sigh of the most profound and exhausted relief. (The Amber Spyglass p.431-2)

## The Church

If you have lost your faith, what can you make of the Church? The followers are blind fools, and the leaders are only interested in power. Philip Pullman draws on the dark history of the Church to relive the clawing for politics and power and the horror of the inquisition.

"Sisters," she began, "let me tell you what is happening, and who it is that we must fight. For there is a war coming. I don't know who will join with us, but I know whom we must fight. It is the Magisterium, the church. For all its history ... it's tried to suppress and control every natural impulse. And when it can't control them, it cuts them out... That is what the church does, and every church is the same: control, destroy, obliterate every good feeling. So if a war comes, and the church is on one side of it, we must be on the other, no matter what strange allies we find ourselves bound to." (The Subtle Knife p.52)

[Speaking about an ancient angel:] "She told me many things... She said that all the history of human life has been a struggle between wisdom and stupidity. She and the rebel angels, the followers of wisdom, have always tried to open minds; the Authority and his churches have always tried to keep them closed..."

"And for most of that time, wisdom has had to work in secret, whispering her words, moving like a spy through the humble places of the world while the courts and palaces are occupied by her enemies." (The Amber Spyglass p.506)

The Church is portrayed as oppressive and closed minded. It dominates and destroys the lives of those it rules. We who are Christians know that the real Church is the coming together of those who have been saved from the wrath to come and the powerlessness of life now. Those who have willingly surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ, who willingly surrendered his to death for their salvation.

What we must ask ourselves is, which picture will be believed by those outside the Church today, looking in? Peter urged us to "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15), but how

many people see that hope in our lives enough to make them ask the question? There is a telling indictment in *The Subtle Knife*:

"A rebellion against the church?"

"Partly, aye. There was a time when he thought of making it an issue of force, but he turned away from that."

"Why? Was the church too strong?"

"No," said the old servant, "that wouldn't stop my master... No, it's my belief he turned away from a rebellion against the church not because the church was too strong, but because it was too weak to be worth the fighting." (The Subtle Knife p.47-8)

## The World of the Dead

The sad thing about Philip Pullman's loss of faith is that he has no choice but to paint a picture of life after death as without hope. If there is no God, then there can be no heaven, and what can you do then?

Even those who are not committed Christians have a hope that there is some sort of heaven waiting for them. When sharing the gospel we take that hope away when explaining the problem of sin, but return it to them greatly magnified when explaining about salvation through the cross. Philip Pullman takes away heaven, says it is all a lie, and replaces it with an awful prospect of an eternity of dreariness and misery.

I find it hard to believe that people would accept his view, mainly because it is so unattractive and depressing. And, far from being offended by his description of life after death, I feel a great sadness, that he may be living his life with this prospect:

"'It is a prison camp,' said Balthamos. 'The Authority established it in the early ages.'... 'Everything about it is secret. Even the churches don't know; they tell their believers that they'll live in Heaven, but that's a lie.'" - The Amber Spyglass p.35.

Yet the Bible promises us "No eye has seen, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor.2:9) The promise of a kingdom to come is very real: "...They were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for

them." (Heb.11:16)

The other interesting thing is how Philip Pullman views those who have been faithful to God as either wasting their lives ("while all the joy of life was going to waste around us"), or being so fanatical that they can't see the truth when it is staring them in the face:

"When we were alive, they told us that when we died we'd go to heaven. And they said that heaven was a place of joy and glory and we would spend eternity in the company of saints and angels praising the Almighty, in a state of bliss. That's what they said. And that's what led some of us to give our lives, and others to spend years in solitary prayer, while all the joy of life was going to waste around us, and we never knew.

"Because the land of the dead isn't a place of reward or a place of punishment. It's a place of nothing. The good come here as well as the wicked, and all of us languish in this gloom for ever, with no hope of freedom, or joy, or sleep or rest or peace..."

But her ghost was thrust aside by the ghost of a man who looked like a monk: thin, and pale even in his death, with dark zealous eyes. He crossed himself and murmured a prayer, and then he said:

"...The world we lived in was a vale of corruption and tears. Nothing there could satisfy us. But the Almighty has granted us this blessed place for all eternity, this paradise, which to the fallen soul seems bleak and barren, but which the eyes of faith see as it is, overflowing with milk and honey and resounding with the sweet hymns of the angels. This is heaven, truly! ... My companions and I of the true faith will remain here in our blessed paradise, and spend eternity singing the praises of the Almighty, who has given us the judgement to tell the false from the true."

Once again he crossed himself, and then he and his companions turned away in horror and loathing. (The Amber Spyglass p.335-6)

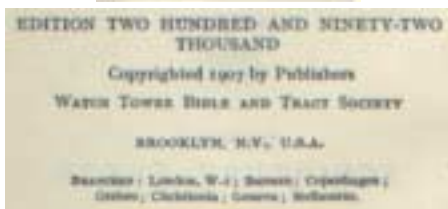
Perhaps this is what offends some Christians - being pictured like that. Personally "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim.1:12) and I know His promises, and I would hope that my life would tell a much better story for people to believe in than that.

*To be continued next Quarterly*

# WATCH THE OWER

2004/1

## BIRTHDAY BOOK



I was surprised to obtain this book with a number of other publications recently, as I had no idea that it even existed. As you can see from the images of the title pages above it is an official Watchtower Society publication of 1907 that is entitled, "Daily Heavenly Manna and Birthday Record."

This means of course that the Watchtower Society believed that you can receive heavenly manner and also celebrate birthdays. However, were not the Scriptures just the same then as they are now - yes? Had Jehovah not made His will plain - yes? Did Jehovah change His mind - No! The Watchtower Society made the change under Rutherford and tried to claim 'new light' but there was none.

Just two years later, according to current Watchtower teaching, Jehovah was going to choose His one true organisation and, again according to the Society, He chose them - when they celebrated birthdays! If it was okay with Jehovah then it is certainly okay with Him now!

Look at what the Society said in 1907,

"Our first edition of 'Manna,' 20,000, met with far better success than we dared hope for; and we have been greatly encouraged by the kind words

of its many friends far and near. Some call it their 'Heavenly Breakfast Food' and tell that they feast upon its lessons as regularly as the sun rises... Some use them as birthday presents and holiday gifts... In this edition we have added the Autograph and Birthday record feature... To see the autographs of our friends daily is a pleasure, and to be reminded of their birthday is a great convenience. The book will last a life-time, and can be used year after year, for the sacred message never grows old..."

This is taken from the preface. It made me wonder what those Witnesses did with this book, still using it in their life-time, some 20 years later when birthdays were of Satan.

To prove just how much God accepts this remembrance in the space provided for February 16 the owner of this copy has written,

"Praise ye the Lord! Charles T Russell 1852 Alleghany."

Notice too however, that this book is seen as messages from heaven - that is God speaking. Now God does not change and His message is always the same. We should, therefore, be able to reprint many if not all of these messages that were so uplifting and inspiring in a Watchtower Society Daily Reading Book today? Could we? Alas no, because the author would be disfellowshipped.

## TEACHING

Today the Watchtower Society says of birthdays,

"Do Bible references to birthday celebrations put them in a favourable light? The Bible makes only two references to such celebrations...Jehovah's Witnesses take note that God's Word reports unfavourably about birthday celebrations and to shun these." - Reasoning from the Scriptures, pp. 68-69.

We also read on the official Watchtower web site,

"Birthdays: The only two birthday celebrations spoken of in the Bible were held by persons who did not worship Jehovah. (Genesis 40:20-22; Mark 6:21, 22, 24-27) The early Christians did not celebrate birthdays. The custom of celebrating

birthdays comes from ancient false religions. True Christians give gifts and have good times together at other times during the year." - [http://www.watchtower.org/library/rq/article\\_11.htm](http://www.watchtower.org/library/rq/article_11.htm)

Both of these comments lead to guilt by association and, indeed, they are not the whole story.

First, the Bible does not report unfavourably about birthdays it shows the acts of evil men. Indeed, the Bible does not comment about birthdays at all. We must, therefore, come to the conclusion that such days come under the jurisdiction of the following;

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. - Colossians 2:6&7

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. Romans 14:4-6

These verses teach that, providing what we do does not break another law of God, such as idolatry, we have freedom with regard to celebrating days and we should not judge each other.

Second, if true Christians give gifts at other times during the year what is wrong with giving gifts on the day of their birth? Their argument is illogical.

Third, they say that there are only two references to such celebrations but they seem to have overlooked the greatest birthday celebration of all - that of the Lord Jesus Christ. As such, then, if men doing evil things make it wrong to celebrate surely we can argue that the angels rejoicing and the Magi

bringing gifts make it right to celebrate.

The Bible does not say one thing or another and wholesome celebration is obviously not condemned by the Scriptures.

## DAILY READINGS

How sad that the Watchtower Society, some 100 years after this book was published, have moved so far from the truth of God's Word which this compiler, G.W.Seibert, seemed to have a grasp of. Here are a few examples with comment:

"January 12 (quoting Galatians 1:6) Let us learn well this lesson of reprov- ing others very gently, very consider- ately, kindly, by a hint rather than a direct charge and details of the wrong... We are to be less careful for the punishments that will follow wrongdoings than for the recovery of the erring one out of the error of his way. We are not to attempt to judge and punish one another for misdeeds, but rather to remember that this is in the hands of the Lord."

If this Biblical thought were to be applied to the Society today the ma- jority of judicial committee hearings would be cancelled. The list, of sometimes petty accusations, would be torn up and the elders would visit to plead with the one to repent rather than tell them when the com- mittee hearing is. Family would not be told to shun the one being judged but, rather, to reach out to them in love and wisdom, to win them back to the Lord, not to return to the or- ganisation and its procedures.

"March 15 (quoting Hebrews 10:38) It is not enough that, by faith, we re- ceive the first impulse of life, but, hav- ing passed from death to life, by the same means, we must *continue* to receive and appropriate spiritual nour- ishment, that we may grow thereby; we must walk by faith, following the leading of the Holy Spirit through the Word of Truth. The life of faith is an individual matter, as well of the heart as the head. It is far more than an ac- ceptance of doctrines which we con- sider scriptural and therefore true; it is the *assimilation* of that which we have proved to be the Truth, so that its prin- ciples become our principles..." (All emphasis in the original)

Almost a hint of the Trinity there! Certainly the Holy Spirit is given His full title and not just 'holy spirit' as it would be these days. However, notice that 'taking in knowledge,' which is the primary aim of the So- ciety today, is not enough - it must

be of the heart and not just the head. However, the greatest change that has taken place over these true words is the fact that no longer, according to the Society, is the life of faith an "individual mat- ter," you can only live such a life in union with the organisation.

"March 29 (quoting Ephesians 2:8) As members of the fallen race we were incapable of doing any work which our holy God could accept. Our present standing, therefore, as New Creatures, is not the result of any- thing that the old creature did, or could have done. It is not of our- selves; it is the gift of God... We were created in Christ Jesus, God's work- manship - prepared *for* good works, but not *by* good works."

I never thought I would see such an admission in an official Watch- tower publication. How tragic it is that they have moved away through 'new light' (could this be the 'angel of light' of 2 Corinthians 11:14?) to a salvation by works. Taking in knowledge, staying part of a man made organisation, treat- ing properly the 'anointed ones' etc. Yet there is nothing we can do: It is not *by* it is prepared *for*.

"April 12 (quoting 1 Corinthians 10:16,17) It is one cup, though it be the juice of many grapes, even as it is one loaf, though it be from many grains... There is no other way that we can attain the new nature than by accepting the Lord's invitation to drink his cup, and be broken with him as members of the one loaf, and to be buried with him in baptism into his death, and thus to attain with him res- urrection glory..."

No distinction, only *one* body and cup of which *all* partake. Indeed, not to partake would be showing that we are not part of that salva- tion that Christ has won. How sad, therefore, that the majority of Wit- nesses on earth today are forbidden to take of the bread or wine.

"May 21 (quoting 2 Timothy 3:16,17) It will be well for us all to remember that all the graces of the Spirit, all the progress in the knowledge of divine things to which we have already at- tained, that may have helped us nearer to God and to holiness have come to us through the Scriptures of the Old Testament and through the words of our Lord and inspired apos- tles: nor will it be necessary to go to other channels for the true wisdom which would prepare us for the salva- tion promised."

***No other channel is needed!*** This

is not true today, we must have the teachings of the Watchtower Society - this, surely, is about as far as you can possible get way from original truth.

"October 13 (quoting James 2:18) While the Lord's people of the present age are not to be judges by their works but their faith, nevertheless works will be required. By our works we can demonstrate our faith... that faith will be acceptable to him and we will be counted perfect and be granted a share in the Kingdom."

I never though I would see this verse explained in its context by a Society publication. Indeed, works demonstrate the faith we already have - the works do not lead us to faith.

Although there could be many other entries worthy of comment I will restrict myself to just one more,

"December 25 (quoting Luke 2: 10,11) Although we cannot agree that this is the proper day for celebrating the birth of our dear Redeemer... nevertheless, since he did not intimate his desire that we should celebrate his birthday, it is quite immaterial upon what day the event, of so great importance to all, is celebrated. Upon this day, so generally celebrated, we may properly enough join with all whose hearts are in the attitude of love and appreciation toward God and toward the Saviour. The habit of giving little remem- brances one to another at this time of year seems to us specially appropri- ate. God is the giver of every good and perfect gift. He is continually giv- ing and we are continually receiving from him; but, amongst all his gifts, the one greatest importance to us is the gift of his Son to be our Re- deemer."

Such a sensible and indeed Bibli- cal position to take, how sad that the Watchtower Society today do not mark the greatest birth of all time. They never consider what it means for the Christ to come into the world and overcome the dark- ness. They do not give thanks for the greatest gift ever given.

Am I saying that everything in this book is in line with mainstream Christian teaching today? No. But what I am saying is that at this time there could have well been some who truly knew the Lord through the Biblical relationship of grace not works, with Jesus Christ. It would, however, be difficult to feel that this was the case today with the teach- ings that have moved so far away from the original truth. ☐

# TRUTH RESTORED - 38

BY MIKE & ANN THOMAS

## AFRICA

By the time you read this the second Mormon temple in Africa will have been dedicated, in Accra, Ghana. The first was in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1982. It is the 117<sup>th</sup> Mormon temple across the world and marks a solid foothold for the Mormon Church in West Africa. Another is scheduled for Nigeria in this year of 2004. It has been interesting to see how the Mormon Church has handled what might be a delicate situation on a continent the vast majority of whose population would, until 1978, have been *persona non grata* in Mormonism. Up to that time the attitude and official doctrine regarding people of African descent might be summed up in the words of Bruce R McConkie:

Though he was a rebel and an associate of Lucifer in pre-existence, and though he was a liar from the beginning whose name was Perdition, Cain managed to attain the privilege of mortal birth... he came out in open rebellion, fought God, worshipped Lucifer, and slew Abel...

As a result of his rebellion, *Cain was cursed with a dark skin; he became the father of the Negroes*, and those spirits who were not worthy to receive the priesthood are born through his lineage. (*Mormon Doctrine*, Bruce R. McConkie, 1958, p.102. emphasis added)

John Taylor, Mormonism's third prophet, declared of Negroes:

And after the flood we are told that the curse that had been pronounced upon Cain was continued through Ham's wife, as he had married a wife of that seed. And why did it pass through the flood? *Because it was necessary that the devil should have a representation upon the earth as well as God.* (*Journal of Discourse*, vol.22, p.304. emphasis added)

We are, of course, familiar with the many racist and disparaging views held by previous generations of Mormon leaders on this subject. But, after all, that was "just their opinion" and the new, rehabilitated Mormonism grows from strength to strength with nary a glance back

into it's own dark history.

## GROWTH – AT ANY COST

From the time of the establishment of the church, 1830, until 1978 Negroes were denied the priesthood. On June 9, 1978 church leaders announced a remarkable change in doctrine that removed this prohibition. Today blacks of African lineage are given "all the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords." (*Deseret News*, June 9, 1978)

The decision to allow Negroes to hold priesthood office has opened up a whole new mission field for the church. Church membership in South Africa between 1935 and 1965 increased by 3,500 members. Between 1965 and 1993 the increase was over 17,000. A growth of 362% in less than thirty years, directly attributable, by the church's own admission, to the announcement of June 1978.

In 1979, the year following the announcement, President Spencer Kimball re-dedicated South Africa (there had been Mormon activity in South Africa as early as the 1850's). 1985 saw the dedication of the Johannesburg Temple. By 1990 Africa was made a separate Area, with headquarters in Johannesburg. In East Africa the first Kenyan to join the church was baptised in 1980. Uganda saw its first baptisms in the late 1980's and one of the first baptisms for Tanzania took place in 1990.

Overall church growth of over 150% in the last twenty years is in no small part attributable to the influx of Africans, or people of African descent, into the church all over the world. The strengthening of the church by this means has been so effective one wonders why the decision to admit Negroes was not made earlier. There hangs a tale. The history of this aspect of church policy makes one wonder why the decision was made at all if not for the sake of expediency. So what if it cost a key doctrine?

This dubious history notwith-

standing, Gordon B Hinckley expressed gratitude "for the brotherhood that exists among us, that neither colour of skin nor land of birth can separate us as thy sons and daughters," as he dedicated the Accra Ghana Temple on Sunday, 11 January, 2004.

## SATAN'S STRONGHOLD?

Yet the idea of a connection between the African and Satan still lingers. In a recent issue the unofficial Mormon on-line magazine, *Meridian*, began publishing a series of excerpts from a book, *Safe Journey: An African Adventure*, by Glen L. Pace, which looks at the Mormon experience in Africa. The first instalment begins thus:

When the temple is dedicated in Ghana, Sunday, January 11, by President Gordon B. Hinckley it will be, according to Glenn L. Pace, "like an atomic bomb has been dropped **right in the middle of Satan's stronghold in West Africa.** It will be the most significant thing that as affected West Africa since the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It will be the beginning of the end of Satan's hold on these countries." (emphasis added)

I confess, I did a double take, read it again, and marvelled at this audacious rewriting of history. It is as though nothing of any significance pertaining to the Christian faith had happened there for two thousand years.

Telling how it was Africans, having read Mormon literature that had come their way, who had written to the church asking for 'holy books' he writes:

Slowly, without the authority of the Church and without knowledge of each other, congregations spontaneously arose as people were touched by the message. They built small meetinghouses (sic); they patterned their doctrine and teachings after the Church, some even named themselves The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Without priesthood authority and direction, these churches had omissions and errors. In some there were hallelujahs, drum

beats and the passing of collection plates. Yet what was clear as Elder Pace reiterates in his book the message of the gospel is universal. In Africa, it found an exuberant, innately spiritual people, hungry for the message.

Hallelujahs? Drumbeats? The passing of collection plates? You can almost taste the contempt for these things in the writer's words. I wonder what this man thought "Hallelujahs" signified? I wonder if he thought what the collections were for, and where this custom came from? I wonder if he even understood that Africa has a rich Christian history and a strong Christian presence in the world today? The following potted history of African Christianity, for which we are grateful to Christian network links for Africa, gives just a glimpse of that continent's Christian heritage:

## CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA

Christianity came to Africa in the 1st century AD. Tradition records that it was St Mark who planted the church in Alexandria about AD 65. Even before that, however, the New Testament records that Jesus and his family were refugees in Egypt, and so it would have been in Africa that he learnt to walk and talk.

The first Christians in Egypt were mostly Jews and Greeks who were living there, but by the end of the second century large numbers of native Egyptians were joining the church, and the scriptures were translated into three local languages. In the 3rd century the Christians suffered several persecutions from the Roman rulers, and in Egypt some fled as refugees to the deserts. When the persecutions died down, they stayed to pray, and the first monastic communities were formed. Monasticism spread to other parts of the church as well, and so this was one of the African contributions to global Christianity.

In the 4th century there were several theological controversies in Africa, and one of the most significant was that between Arius and Athanasius. Their dispute forced Christians to define certain articles of the Christian faith more closely, and the Symbol of Faith or Nicene Creed was the result. The statement of faith that (with some variations) is accepted by most Christians around the world has its roots in African theology.

Christianity in Africa therefore goes back a long way!

There were also Christian communities in north-western Africa, in the area today called the Maghreb, which in-

cludes Tunisia and northern Algeria. The church there was part of the Western Church, centred on Rome, though it, too, produced some influential theologians, such as Cyprian and Augustine.

The African church enjoyed a respite from persecution for 300 years, from the 4th to the 6th centuries, but in the 7th century Arabs invaded Africa, and conquered most of North Africa. The Arabs were Muslim, and so Christians became second-class citizens except in Ethiopia, which managed to retain its independence. Christianity began to spread southward from Ethiopia in the 12th and 13th centuries, but only slowly, because of Arab naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean.

The Arab naval supremacy was broken by the Portuguese in the 16th century, and they established some Christian missions along parts of the east and west coasts of Africa. In the 17th century the Portuguese lost their naval supremacy to the Dutch, who established a trading outpost in Southern Africa. Other European nations became interested in Africa for purposes of trade, and much of the trade was in human beings, who were forced to emigrate to the Americas as slaves.

In the 19th century many missionaries from Europe and America came to Africa and started churches in various parts of the continent south of the Sahara. The Christian faith spread slowly at first, but then more rapidly. In the 20th century most mission was through African initiative, and done by members of African independent churches, but also by members of international denominations. Now, at the end of the 20th century, Africa is probably the most Christian continent. There are more Anglicans in Nigeria, for example, than in Britain and the USA.

There are more than 7000 Christian denominations in South Africa alone, ranging in size from a couple of dozen to several million. There are many more in other parts of the continent. Most of these are not on line, and there are many things in African Christianity that the wired world can't even begin to imagine. Nevertheless, we hope these links will give something of the varied flavours on Christianity on this continent.

Steve Hayes

Webmaster: Christian network links for Africa

<http://www.fortunecity.com/meltingpot/cecilian/777/>

We would add that Uganda is experiencing success in dealing with the AIDS epidemic as no other African nation, in no small part because of its Christian nature which makes for progressive and enlight-

ened thinking that other nations are slower to embrace.

Satan's stronghold Mr Pace? We beg to differ and invite you to consider the possibility that Mormonism, once again, is riding on the back of a rich and proud Christian heritage. When the Accra temple held it's open house *Mormonism Researched Ministry* of San Diego, California were there, helping local Christians present a positive witness and encouraging and teaching them in their Christian faith.

Quoting *Operation World*, Bill McKeever reports that 64% of Ghanaians regard themselves as Christians, although very few are connected with any established church. "The fact that many of these professing Christians are not grounded in the Word makes them prime targets for the Mormon missionaries. Churches are in abundance, but many of these are led by pastors with very little biblical education", he reported in a recent MRM newsletter. Bill worked in Ghana with Luke Wilson of the *Institute for Religious Research*, teaching and training at the Maranatha Bible College in Accra.

In our recent Annual Convention we were privileged to hear testimony from Sharif, a pastor in Ghana and a convert from Islam, who is anxious to start an effective outreach to Mormons and other groups who are recruiting his fellow Ghanaians in alarming numbers. We will, of course, be putting him in touch with MRM and others working in his country, but he wishes very much to have the help of Reachout, and we are as keen to help him. If anyone wants to contribute financially to Sharif's work, and /or find out more about him, please get in touch with Reachout. We will be glad to send any money on to him, as well as to pass on any information we can to those who ask.

## SO MANY VOICES

Ask any Mormon why their church exists and they will tell you that, in 1820, Joseph Smith "confused by the strife among different denominations" sought to answer the questions, "Who of all these parties are right; or, are they all wrong together? If any one of them is right, which is it, and how shall I know?" (*Joseph Smith - History* 1:8-10) Seeking truth, he "retired to the woods to pray". The answer he re-

ceived was an effective call to "restore" the true Christian faith and put an end to the "tumult of opinions". Hence, Mormonism.

This picture of a hopelessly divided Christendom has lent a lot of weight down the years to the Mormon argument that, "the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy any confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible." (JSH 1:12) The Mormon appeal to "Moroni's promise" at the back of the *Book of Mormon*, in which the reader is encouraged to "ask God the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye will ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost" (Moroni 10:4), - this appeal is meant to convey the idea that the same process can be gone through by any sincere seeker and all the argument can be cut through and the truth arrived at.

A recent correspondent used the idea to assert that, "all arguments, all conversations about the Bible WILL NEVER CEASE, FOR THERE IS

ROOM FOR THAT VERY DISCUSSION. Meaning the Bible gives room for argument and interpretation."

He goes on to ask:

"Why are there more Christian denominations upon the earth than ever before? Because they all interpret the Bible differently."

But we could ask the same of Mormonism. Why are there so many Mormon denominations? There are literally hundreds of groups, all claiming to be the true Mormon Church. And they have all popped up in less than 200 years. I have before me a list of 219 Mormon sects and I am sure it is already out of date as the figure grows and grows. Surely that beats Christianity into a cocked hat for dividing over issues in a short time! Saying they are all apostate except one is just begging the question. This raises a very good secondary question. While there are many Christian denominations, and all have their "interpretations" (which are mostly on secondary issues I may add) - while there are many of these denominations, most seem perfectly able to co-operate across denominations to spread the gospel

and be Christ to a dying world. Why is this not true about Mormon denominations?

You would expect, wouldn't you, that the Salt Lake sect would have more in common with the Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of LDS (now the Community of Christ) than with Evangelicals, or Baptists, or Catholics. And yet, the Salt Lake Mormons happily co-operate with these Christian denominations, while denouncing all other Mormon groups as apostate. Isn't it odd that there is co-operation with "abominable and corrupt" Christendom (JSH 1:19), but none with other Mormon groups?

Of course, the answer lies with the nature of the church, i.e. it is people, and people are sinful and spoil things. This does not make Christianity apostate, simply real as Christ works in sinners saved by grace to make a church and bride for Himself. This is not, then, an excuse for saying that the Bible is open to interpretation. You have the book open in front of you. You must ask yourself, what does it say? What is it saying to me? (2 Timothy 3:16) ☐

## APOLOGETICS -17

### Learning From Job

I was asked recently to write my testimony around Ezekiel 14:6 and the theme of God's mercy in that if we repent we can be delivered. It stretched me and, I am glad to say, helped me find new insights into my relationship with God. This is what I wrote.

### Turning from Idols

My parents weren't Christians, nor were theirs before them so far as I know. But that is no excuse. Somewhere back then someone deserted God for idols. I guess I was at the end of an assembly line. Every time the world turned, out popped a sinner and I was the latest, the latest God-deserter, the latest idolater.

It seems strange to claim to have deserted a God you have never known, but God made us for Himself and that was not reflected in my life. Like a family leaving a newly born at the doors of an orphanage, my family deserted God at some

point and walked away. And no matter how much they deny it, or how ignorant are future generations, the family connection is there. It sounds like desertion to me.

God made us for Himself and, in an attempt to renew that connection perhaps, my idol became quite sophisticated. I became a Mormon. No one blows their own trumpet like Mormons. Just ask Moroni. It's like being wrong at the top of your voice.

But I didn't know. I didn't know it was detestable to worship a man as though he were God; or to view God as an exalted man; to doubt Christ's promise to keep His own no matter what; to add to Scripture; to denigrate "God's called out people" as abominable; to enter into secret practices and covenants; to deny grace and to want to be god. That I didn't know doesn't make it less detestable, or me any less culpable—just detestable in my ignorance.

I am thankful for two things:

1. For those Christians who saw past the wrong in my faith to the man who had such need and didn't know it;

2. For God's mercy in that, as ignorant and detestable as my ways were, He made a way for me to repent.

God did something "to recapture the hearts of my people Israel, who have deserted me for their idols." (Ezekiel 14:5) It astonishes me that, no matter where you come in the assembly line, be it the first to desert (Adam) or the latest to do so in ignorance (Mike), God is prepared to do something to win you back.

"Repent and turn away from your idols," the merciful LORD says. "Thus [you] will be [Mine], and I shall be [your] God." (Ezekiel 14:6 and 11)

### In the beginning God...

I began to ponder how we approach this whole area of thinking about our faith. As we develop an

apologetic, a reasoned defence or explanation of what we believe, where do we start? The world starts with 'me'; how I view things; the way it seems to me, as a man, or as a woman, or as a Welshman, or...put in your own nationality. And, even as Christians, we can easily give precedence to our own views, or the views of the particular group to which we belong. In doing this we can feel disengaged from what God has been doing in the past, and might be doing elsewhere, as though my life is a clean slate on which God and I can make our own marks. It is this approach that gives birth to the idea that your faith is determined by where you are born, what your parents were, your temperament. Out of this come the extenuating circumstances we feel excuse us before God. We say, "I can't help it", or, as the former Welsh Secretary, Ron Davies, said when explaining his strange and infamous behaviour on a certain London Heath, "We are what we are."

In reading Job (a great book to start the New Year) I began to see a different approach. Although he regards himself as blameless (9:21 He does not mean sinless perfection

here) and, unbeknownst to him, God himself takes the same view (1:8), Job nevertheless say,

How can a mortal be righteous before God? Though one wished to dispute with him, he could not answer him one time out of a thousand. His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?...He alone stretches out the heavens and treads the waves of the sea. He is the Maker of the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south.

He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed, miracles that cannot be counted...How can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy. (Job 9:2-4, 8-10, 14 & 15)

As we present our "reasons to believe" we should remember Job, and the fact that this is the God to whom we are bringing people. While our theology is vital to our witnessing, we should remember that Job's 'comforters' were the ones with all the theology, the tidy theories that explain how it all works.

"Job, God punishes the wicked and

rewards the righteous. Repent of your secret sin and, 'life will be brighter than noonday.'" (Job 11)

They it was who claimed special insight and secret visions,

"I had a vision Job and learned that all men are sinful and you should take it like a man." (Job 4)

They it was who claimed to understand perfectly the justice of God,

"The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out...such is the dwelling of an evil man, such is the place of one who knows not God." (Job 18).

But it was Job who knew God and his place before him. "I could only plead with my Judge for mercy." As we witness we do use reason but there is a better reason than reason itself to come to God. He is there, and we are his, and our apologetic simply helps people to see clearly that, "Though I were innocent ('we are what we are'), I could not answer him; I could only plead with my judge for mercy." This is the way of salvation. If our apologetic does not lead people to cry, "Brothers, what shall we do?" our "reasons to believe" are no reasons at all. ☐

# Apottergetics

As regular readers will be aware Reachout Trust believes that apologetics and good illustrations are vital in communicating the gospel. The question I will be looking at in this article is, can we use Harry Potter as such an illustration?

Please note this article is not about whether we should read Harry Potter or not - our views on this are shown clearly in other articles. Nor are we saying that there are demons lurking behind every cover. We are simply seeking to discover whether this subject can be used in apologetics, for instance as Paul in Athens used a pagan tomb inscription and shared the message of who the true God is (Acts 17).

I would say at the outset that there does seem to me to be a line over which we should not go as far as illustrations are con-

cerned. Paul used an inscription which was open for all to see and revealed to them what they did not know about this God. In the same way we could say Harry Potter, for all his powers, needs a Saviour and then go on to talk about the Saviour.

## TWO BOOKS

Unfortunately, this is not the way things happen, as two books in my possession show and they raise a number of concerns for me.

The first book is "The Gospel according to Harry Potter" by Connie Neal and, although I am not commenting directly on the contents of this book, I would just like to say something about the title. "Gospel" in the Christian sense means Good News but specifically is used of Jesus Christ and salvation - there is none of that in Harry Potter. I think this illustrates

to me the problem we face with attempting to make Harry Potter a resource for sharing the gospel.

Second, a quote highlighted on the back cover of the book from Tony Campolo,

"A wonderful rebuttal for those who see something sinister in this children's classic! Connie Neal helped me to enjoy Harry Potter all the more,"

highlights the lack of caution that is encouraged. Are these books not about witchcraft? Should we not at least teach our kids to read them with caution, not in a totally open-minded way without any regard for the subject matter?

This book, and the one I will mention next, both seek to bring out the 'good points' that we can learn from the Harry Potter books but they seem to ignore the fact that there are instances, and they

seem to be getting progressively worse as the series goes on, of things we would not want our children to do. Why should we use to preach the gospel, when there are many other tools at our disposal, something which may also cause harm?

## TRIUMPH OF GOODNESS

The second book is, *"The Triumph of Goodness"* by Lisa Cherrett. This book we will look at in a little more detail and will, indeed, start that investigation with the issue of the subject matter, but first a little background.

Although this book was only released in the autumn of 2003 we heard about it several months before when one of our supporters received a letter from the author after complaining about an article she wrote in the Bible Reading Fellowship Quarterly defending the Harry Potter articles.

Indeed, Lisa is the Project editor and Managing Editor for the Bible reading notes of the BRF. One would, therefore, hope for at least some Biblical understanding for the foundation of this issue, but in my opinion this is where the problems begin.

Let me, again, please underline that I do not want to find problems in these books that are not there, and I know we could quote passages for hours. However, I believe we do need to see if there is any danger here and whether we can give these books a clean bill of health for all Christians without some sort of health warning.

## BASIS OF WORK

On p.14 of "The Triumph of Goodness" we read,

"Many Christian attacks on the *Harry Potter* stories hinge on the claim that the books are 'about witchcraft'. Perhaps it is natural to assume (particularly if one has not actually read the books!) that because Harry is described as a wizard and attends 'Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry', the stories are based on occult belief and practice, made all the more dangerous to susceptible minds because of the highly entertaining nature of the narrative."

Well, as I have already said something to that effect, this obviously refers to me. However I have read some of the books and I did

not think I was assuming anything. Let's see how this argument develops then.

"Deuteronomy 18:10- 11 says, 'Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practises divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead.' This is a clear basis for Christian belief that involvement in witchcraft of any sort is forbidden by God and therefore must be dangerous to human well-being. I agree fully with this position: 'witchcraft' is out of bounds to followers of Christ."

I couldn't have put it better myself. It does leave me confused though because if witchcraft is out of bounds to Christians surely Harry Potter is out of bounds? It appears not as we then read,

"What, though, does 'witchcraft' actually mean? We would assume that in Deuteronomy the writer is talking about an activity that involves contact with an evil spiritual realm with the aim of controlling the natural world in a supernatural way. This is not what the word 'witchcraft' means when it is used in the context of the *Harry Potter* stories."

## Witchcraft?

Can we look at this, then, a little more clearly because as Lisa says "we would assume" maybe we should look at the meaning of the word witchcraft in the Old Testament as well as some of the other areas which are also out of bounds to followers of Christ.

Deuteronomy 18:10-11 in the King James Bible reads

"There shall not be found among you [*any one*] that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, [*or*] that useth divination, [*or*] an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer."

I do not want to use too much space defining all these terms, although for anyone interested it would be a worth taking the time, but I do want to make a few basic observations.

1. Firstly these verses do not, in most cases, refer to what the person does but rather it is dealing with what they are. It is not whether they make contact or not but what are

they seeking to do?

2. There are many other verses that deal with these issues but the author seems to make no attempt to deal with them. We have in Acts 19 an instance where those that practised magic before they were saved confessed there past and burnt all their books.

The word magic means 'curious arts' and Adam Clarke tells us,

"(from) Greek writers, we know that it signified magical arts, sorceries, incantations, etc. Ephesus abounded with these. Dio Cassius, speaking of the Emperor Adrian, says... 'Adrian was exceedingly addicted to curious arts, and practised divination and magic.'" - Adam Clarke Commentary on the Bible

I would say that this terminology aptly describes the Potter books and so doesn't the Scripture warn us against them?

3. I would also like to mention one word from the verses in Deuteronomy, divination

Interestingly Lisa agrees (p.21) that divination is taught in the school but it is okay because it is taught by a fraud. However, I wonder if that really is the issue. The word means the attempt to contact the supernatural realm for help and that has nothing to do with whether you believe it or not. You can, of course, also use the argument, "well if it is a load of rubbish it doesn't matter and I can get involved." The problem is that making fun is not enough, there is no warning of the potential danger.

Acts 16:16 also needs to be taken into account here. This girl's fortune telling abilities were because of a demonic spirit. How do you know if the person you contact is like this girl or whether it is only a 'bit of fun'? A warning needs to be given so that people can make a decision on all the facts.

Lisa develops here foundation for being able to use Harry Potter further with the following comments on p.15

"Those who engage in occult, supernatural practices reach over, as it were, into a separate spiritual realm in order to gain powers that

are beyond the natural world. In the fictional world of the *Harry Potter* stories, this is not the way things work. Harry and his friends do not derive their magic powers from a spiritual dimension outside of their natural environment. Their whole environment is governed by natural laws that are different from those in our real world: portraits and photographs move and speak; staircases lead somewhere different on Fridays; it's possible to turn beetles into coat buttons, and hedgehogs into pincushions; there are unicorns and centaurs in the forest and merpeople in the lake. So, within the world of this story, Harry's powers are entirely natural - unrelated to the supernatural world that we believe to exist in reality"

I do have problems with the logic of this. The world is governed by natural laws where portraits speak and staircases change their destinations one day a week. Not to mention, of course, spells of invisibility etc. Certainly in the book this is natural but it is not natural in our world, it is supernatural. If someone wants to discover these powers they look to the supernatural force.

How about within the Christian world? If someone with the powers of Harry became a regular church attendee most evangelical churches would lovingly but firmly counsel him to confess that the powers he had were not from God and that he should seek forgiveness and whatever else he might need. We cannot play games with people. We cannot preach the gospel from the Harry Potter books and appear to be in agreement with all that is going on but then, when someone starts to seek out true magic - tell them it is not from Scripture! Let's be honest but sensible with what we say from the beginning.

Lisa Cherrett in her book, claims that if we speak out against Harry Potter we will never encourage the readers to seek Christianity. How-

ever it would seem to me that if we use the magic of Harry Potter to preach the gospel then they are not finding true Christianity at all. Are we going to allow our churches to be full of people who cast spells, who use astrology and who are under the blanket of superstition put down by these practices without saying anything? We mustn't do so just in case they take offence and go, or just in case they do not want to seek such a God.

Yes, as we always say, we must concentrate on the positive and so we need to share a positive God, who he is and what He has done, but at the same time we need to deal with what is wrong with people otherwise when will they ever repent?

Finally I want to briefly address the issue of power. We read on p.15,

"So, when the good and evil wizards all use the same magical power in their battles with each other, the equivalent conflict in the real world is not between supernatural 'white magic' and 'black magic', both of which Christians believe to be forbidden by the Bible. Rather the comparison is with the kinds of technology..."

I would like to answer this by quoting some previous paragraphs I wrote on Harry Potter,

"In *The Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry is told that there is no good and evil, only power. This also does not square up with evangelical Biblical truth. There we are shown that God is an absolute and has an absolute way, something is not either good or evil. This teaching that there is only one power and that it can be manipulated for good or evil (remember Star wars?) is a widely held Eastern belief and is prevalent in occult and new age religions but not in evangelical Christianity. Of course J.K.Rowling is entitled to bring this belief out in her books but it is disappointing that a chil-

dren's book should be presenting such philosophies without any alternatives being shown. Again as Christian parents we need to be aware of such teachings within the books. Like many Witches that I have asked, "where does your power come from," these books simply state that the power is there but no source of the power is ever really discussed, and you end up wondering if the characters really know. One does wonder what conclusions readers of these books might draw from this."

"There are, indeed, instances in the book where characters must choose between doing good or evil. However I would argue that this is different to the gospel in that there is only one power that can be used for either good or evil. With this in mind we probably should not be surprised to find that the wands of the 'good' wizard Harry Potter and the 'bad' wizard Voldemort both have a feather coming from the same source, the magical phoenix called Fawkes owned by Dumbledore. One source of power that can be manipulated for good or evil, an accepted fact in much Witchcraft today."

The problem is that, often, witches today would talk of 'power' and try and give it a natural source because they do not know how else to describe it. Many will admit, though, that whatever the power all magic, black or white, comes from the same source. This is not the Christian worldview and, indeed, is by very nature dangerous because you do not control the power and you do not know which way it is going.

This is the philosophy behind the books and as such I do not believe we should use them to preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ that sets men free from bondage to the magic and supernatural power. ☐

**(Continued from page 1)**

#### **LEADER CONTINUED**

Our funds are not infinite and often we live from day to day in the ministry and so it is important that we use the finances given to us in the best way. Our readiness to listen, we hope, will give confidence to others to give more to us knowing that we are careful what we do. For the latest areas that we hope to be

involved in please see the back page.

Finally, while we are on the subject of listening it would be good to remind ourselves how vital it is in our ministry when helping the people we want to reach out to. James says,

*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak... - James 1:19

Someone once said that we have

two ears and one mouth and that we should use them in that proportion.

Whether it is in a situation helping others; or fellowshiping with our brothers and sisters; or running an international ministry, may we know what it is to have "ears to hear." ☐



I was interested to read your latest article on Benny Hinn in the most recent edition of *Reachout Quarterly*. I want to say again that I think your target thoroughly deserves it. It is a shame that you have to anticipate receiving 'scorching' <sup>emails or</sup> letters from some readers. It is not difficult to see how many errors Hinn teaches and how false he is. I believe very definitely that healings and miracles are for us today, but this is a man who has no qualms about promising miracles and healings which he does not deliver and taking money from the gullible. Do please keep it up. False teachers within the body of Christ are far more dangerous than those outside in the cults, because they are able to 'deceive even the very elect'. - M.Y. - Dorset

#### **Paranormal Programming Consultation**

At its meeting on 20 November, following the consultation process which ended in September, the Commission approved a new section 1.10 of the Programme Code. I attach a copy of the press release and the new section which has been placed on the ITC website. It has taken effect on 8 December 2003. Thank you for your contribution to the consultation. When it assumes its powers on 29 December, Ofcom will apply the ITC Programme Code to commercial broadcasters but, as you know, will be consulting on a new Ofcom Code in the first half of next year. - Martin Booth, Programme Manager, ITC.

Following a public consultation earlier this year, the ITC has confirmed a revision to the Programme Code, which applies to all ITC licensees.

The consultation was on Section 1.10 of the Code, addressing the issue of "Psychic Practices". The ITC received over 200 responses from licensees, organisations and individuals. After consideration of these responses, including the need to limit child viewing of psychic practices, the Code wording has been

revised as follows:

#### **1.10 The Occult and 'Psychic' Practices**

##### **1.10.(i) Exorcisms and the Occult**

Actual demonstrations of exorcisms and occult practices, such as those involving the purported invocation of unknown spirits of the dead or negative forces, are not acceptable in non-fictional programming except in the context of a legitimate investigation. They should not, in any case, be shown before the watershed.

##### **1.10(ii) Other Paranormal and related Issues**

NB These paragraphs refer only to issues dealt with outside a religious or doctrinal context. Section 7 deals with religious programming and issues.

Demonstrations of clairvoyance, clairaudience, and similar practices are acceptable only when they are clearly and explicitly presented as entertainment, or when they are the subject of legitimate investigation. Programmes should not be included at times when significant numbers of children are expected to be watching: for example, before the watershed on public service channels. When presented for entertainment purposes, measures should include announcements before and at the end of programmes to indicate their nature as entertainment, and appropriate acknowledgement of the existence of differing opinions as to the true nature of clairvoyance and clairvoyance. Programmes should not include specific advice to particular contributors or viewers about health or medical matters, the law or personal finance or include specific advice which might significantly influence behaviour in relation to personal relationships. They should not include advice which might be damaging or unduly distressing to those concerned or which might unduly disconcert the likely audience.

Demonstrations of predictive practices, whether 'psychic' or otherwise (eg horoscopes, palmistry), are acceptable only when they are presented as entertainment or are the subject of legitimate investigation. They should not include specific advice to particular contributors or viewers about health or medical matters or about personal finance. They should not be included at times when large numbers of children are expected to be watching.

Fiction programmes containing 'psychic' or occult phenomena should not normally be scheduled before the watershed, although a fantasy context, for example, may justify such a scheduling.

Many thanks for the excellent and helpful articles. I especially appreciate, as a pastor, the insightful comments on such things as G12 and other issues concerning the church which become popular but often have more cons than pros, and yet

are sometimes difficult to weigh up. Blessings - P.D.

I read with interest your article "A look at the G12" I really know nothing about G12. Some years ago I heard Colin Dye speak, and felt he had a good message. And so I travelled through the first one and a half pages of your article quite easily, but from the section "Reservation" onwards I felt I was sharing your concerns. Finally what really shocked me were the quotations from Pastor Gott's 2002 and 2001 conferences in London. Having been in fellowship with Exclusive brethren until 1970 I know only too well the dreadfulness of locking on to a leader as Pastor Gott does with Pastor Cesar and the reckless attaching oneself to a particular leader. Because I have a brother and a sister still in Exclusive brethren I can say this is exactly how they are still held where they are. As your article shows the protection of scripture is lost in such systems. There is no room for prayer about checking out, weighing out and I think you are very right to draw attention to the G12 movement in the balanced way you do. Thank you and wishing you continued blessing from God for all your service to our Lord and Saviour. - P.C. - Surrey



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# CHEERFUL GIVING

Since April 2000 it has been possible for us to reclaim any tax that you may have paid on the amount of your gifts to Reachout Trust no matter how small providing you instruct us to treat them as "Gift Aid Donations."

## WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?

1. It is good stewardship – your gift is increased by over 20% without you giving anything extra.
2. It helps us to be able to plan the work ahead more effectively.
3. It enables us to accomplish many of the projects that we believe that the Lord would have us undertake.

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Consider whether you feel the Lord wants you to make a **regular donation—this is especially very helpful for us and we make special offers under our Action Pack scheme for such people** (ask for leaflet) - or a once-off gift. Fill in the form below and send it with the gift. We will receive it with great appreciation and do everything else that is necessary.

## WHAT WILL YOU SPEND IT ON?

Obviously there are the normal overheads of the Trust – wages, rent, advertising etc. These costs are kept to a minimum. We then have a Reachout Development Plan, which is a priority list of what we would want to undertake in the next year. At present we are looking to **publish** further material. We are also completing the update of our **computer programme** that runs our database, invoicing etc and this will cost around £5,000. After this we will update our **information programme** and install it on a new computer making it more searchable.

If you are eligible please could we encourage you to complete the form below (you can photostat the page) by ticking the appropriate boxes, deleting the \* inappropriate words and sending it with your gift to **REACHOUT TRUST 24 ORMOND ROAD RICHMOND SURREY TW10 6TH**. Do not worry if your circumstances might change in the future because you can withdraw this authority at any time by simply writing to us. Many thanks.

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By signing this form I declare that I have paid an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the sum of 28p for every £1 given.

I further agree to inform you if my tax circumstances change or I wish to withdraw this agreement.

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