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Review: Gods of the New Age

Edward Hindson

Liberty University, ehindson@liberty.edu

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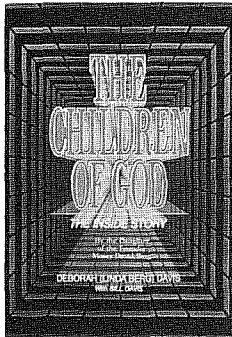
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**THE CHILDREN OF GOD:
The Inside Story
by Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis**

Reviewed by Ed Hindson,
Senior Editor



The cult explosion of the 1960s and 1970s often hitchhiked on the contemporary "Jesus Movement" and its reaction to the hippie counterculture. One of the most bizarre cults rising to popularity at that time was the multinational movement known as the Children of God. This book is the personal memoir of the frightening and fascinating experiences of the daughter of David Berg, founder of that cult and author of its famous "Mo(ses) Letters." This compelling firsthand account provides keen insight into the psychology of religious cults.

Here is a tale of intimidation, deceit, twisted logic, immorality, and gross personal manipulation of thousands of people. Rarely has someone so close to the leadership of such a cult exposed the entire family history behind the cult leader. In carefully documented fashion Deborah Davis tells the story of her grandparents' break with the Christian church ("Disciples") and their subsequent rise to leadership in a Pentecostal healing ministry (a path very similar to that of Jim Jones of the People's Temple cult). Raised under the influence of his dominant and powerful preacher-mother, David Berg would develop an itinerant evangelistic ministry of his own. With pathos, compassion, and humility his daughter tells the story of her early childhood during those days. Locked in a world with little security other than her ever-traveling family, she devel-

oped a complete dependence upon them for all contact with the real world.

Without bitterness or accusation, the author tells of her father's incestuous advances, her broken marriage, her children born out of wedlock, and the all-pervasive grip the cult "Family" held on her total being. Yet, she admits "I was responsible for being dominated . . . Neither my father nor this movement could have held any power over me at all unless I had yielded to them."

She tells the story of her father's self-deduced belief that he had become God's End-Time Prophet and that his letters were revelations of God's Word to His true disciples. Riding the crest of the Jesus Movement and fueled by his mother's total rejection of the established churches, David Berg created the Royal Family to bring in the kingdom of God. Luring converts from the disillusioned youth of the sixties and early seventies, with the slogan "Jesus loves you," the Children of God developed into a rapidly spreading street cult.

With genuine caution the author warns against the Charismatic confusion that runs through the COG cult. She writes: "Christians involved in Charismatic circles should take a long look at the early stages of the Jesus People movement and specifically the Children of God, which began as a Charismatic, Bible-believing organization." She adds further, "Many Christians who claim to have discernment have been duped by men such as my father boasting the 'gifts' of the Holy Spirit." She then concludes: "By their *fruits* shall ye know them—not by their *gifts*."

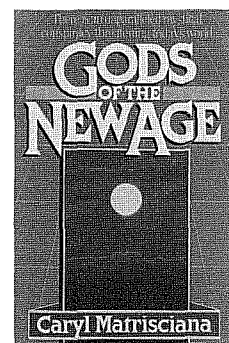
Deborah's keen insight about cult life, its control over its leadership, revelations of exception to biblical commands, and the occult invasion of the mind of the leader are chilling indeed. Yet, in spite of all this, she admits: "Coming out of a cult is more difficult by far than being in." Emerging from a life of falsehood and admitting you have been wrong, she warns, is a painfully excruciating experience. The cult member has nowhere to turn for

help because he has been programmed to hate and distrust everyone. She tells of the spiritual confusion she and her husband faced after their break with COG. She writes: "You can be out of a cult physically, but still be very much 'in' the cult, for the cult is part of you." Freedom from the cult comes only when we find God's true freedom and forgiveness, she adds. Her story reaches its climax when she and her husband finally come to Christ in 1981 at a Bill Gothard seminar in Long Beach, California, after three years of spiritual confusion since their break with COG.

This is a powerful yet heartbreaking book that should be read by every Christian. Its insight, pathos, and detail will keep you on the edge of your seat. Its tale of tragedy will give you compassion (not anger) for those locked in religious cults. If you really want to help them, get this book! (Zondervan, 1984, 244pp., \$10.95)

**GODS OF THE NEW AGE
by Caryl Matrisciana**

Reviewed by Ed Hindson



"The West has been invaded by the East!" claims the cover of this controversial expose of the New Age Movement. Written by a former Krishna cultist and New Age advocate, this book is an absorbing and compelling account of one woman's struggle to understand the modern world.

This book is not a technical or doctrinal evaluation, rather it is a vivid personal account of one person's spiritual odyssey from the teenage rock culture of the 1960s through the

Eastern cults (Krishna, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Astral Projection, etc.) of the 1970s, finally culminating in a personal conversion to Jesus Christ. It is a powerful and compelling real-life drama. Though written to laymen, every pastor needs to read this book in order to understand the mind-set of today's 30-year-olds, many of whom are products of the same subculture as Caryl Matrisciana.

Raised in India by British parents, the author grew up with an aversion to Hinduism, yet she fell into the mystical magnetism of its Westernized counterpart: the New Age Movement. Her story begins as a teenager watching the play "Hair," where she begins longing for the "Age of Aquarius." Her pursuit of inner happiness eventually leads her through materialism, drugs, yoga, meditation, est, rebirthing, mind-control, and finally the pursuit of Krishna-consciousness. Her story could be repeated many times by the "victims" of New Age philosophy. A broken marriage, live-in arrangements, promiscuity, and eventually total con-

fusion lead her to complete desperation and an encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Her clear, powerful salvation testimony needs to be read by every Christian personal worker who wants to understand how to reach today's young adults.

The author provides a personal look at an aspect of contemporary life that is foreign to many Christians. She is very critical of New Age philosophy as reflected in rock music and in movies such as *Star Wars* and *The Empire Strikes Back*. She is convinced that these films are filled with Hindu/Krishna concepts promoting reincarnation, yoga, transcendental meditation, altered consciousness, and so forth. Her comments are balanced and perceptive, and she is obviously right!

In light of the growing impact of counterfeit religion, every Christian would do well to read this book. Caryl's own testimony says it best: "Like the blazing sun breaking through a month of foggy days, Jesus entered my life. The counterfeits vanished, burned away by His genuine gifts. How desperately I had needed Him

before I had even understood who He was!" Her vivid personal narrative will not let you put this book down once you begin reading her story. (Harvest House, 1985, 221pp., \$6.95)

UNHOLY DEVOTION: Why Cults Lure Christians
by Harold Bussell

The dean of the chapel at Gordon College has written a clever treatment of the psychospiritual lure of the cults. In this volume he examines such issues as uncritical devotion to leaders, subjective religious experiences, inflated expectations, the vulnerability of power, and the problem of legalism. He calls for a genuine Christianity that is morally absolute and culturally relative as the best deterrent to cultic enslavement. (Zondervan, 1983, 128pp., \$4.95) —E.H.

COME BEFORE WINTER... AND SHARE MY HOPE
by Charles R. Swindoll

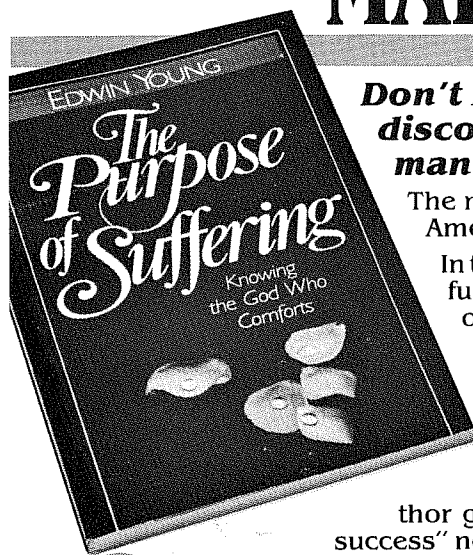
Typical of his jam-packed, thought-provoking style in *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*, Charles R. Swindoll repeats his performance in *Come before Winter... and Share My Hope*. Through witty stories and ancient proverbs, he presents a treasure of encouragement and hope in 122 ever-so-brief chapters. Each concludes with an appropriate Bible reading. Swindoll's creative presentations are inspirational daily devotions making it tough to read just one. (Multnomah Press, 344pp., \$13.95) —D.W.H.

THE HIGH COST OF INDIFFERENCE
edited by Richard Cizik

This collection of statements on a variety of political and social issues—from abortion to poetry, nuclear arms to pornography—is different in its emphasis on getting involved. Each chapter contains a brief examination of current condition and a statement of biblical position, but the largest section is an examination of how Christians relate to a given situation, what can be done about it, and how to do it.

A lengthy section of the book is a debated discussion of how government works and how Christians can make their influence known. There is a great deal of very practical advice on everything from organizing to letter-writing. (Regal Books, 1984, 238pp., \$6.95) —W.D.B.

MAD AT GOD?



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