

tivate the spirit of tolerance in our hearts; but we should not allow the policy of toleration to be exploited and abused by

fanatical sectarian groups which are subversive political movements in ecclesiastical disguise."

Religion As Therapy

"Saving Therapy: Exploring the Religious Self-Help Literature" by Wendy Kaminer, in *Theology Today* (Oct. 1991), P.O. Box 29, Princeton, N.J. 08542.

Millions of Americans read religious self-help books. M. Scott Peck's first tome, *The Road Less Traveled* (1978), was on the best-seller list for years, and works by such authors as Charles (Grace Awakening) Swindoll and Gordon (*Renewing Your Spiritual Passion*) MacDonald also have worldwide audiences. Such books, reports Kaminer, a lawyer and visiting scholar at Radcliffe, "are marketed as primers on personality development and psychotherapy, child rearing, spouse abuse, depression, and despair, as well as the search for love, happiness, and salvation." The books portray God as a loving parent, and advise readers to acknowledge their dependence on Him, to reject individualism, and to love themselves as well as their neighbors.

Nineteenth-century liberal Protestantism, for all its faults, at least encouraged people to act to shape their environments, Kaminer says. "Now popular religion, like a 12-step [recovery] group, [tells] us that we're powerless." Most of the pop religious literature is devoid of "thoughtful discussion of moral behavior." The writers provide "a laundry list of moral wrongs—abortion, homosexuality, adultery, athe-

ism, and rebellion—but no guidance in resolving moral dilemmas."

The writers usually "claim a fellowship with their readers, admitting their own fallacies, sins, and neuroses." MacDonald devotes a whole book to his own repentance of adultery. But they also set themselves up as authorities, even as they disclaim any higher expertise. Peck, for example, "bemoans our tendency to 'let our authorities do our thinking for us,'" but clearly regards himself as an authority. He speculates that people who "slip away" from his workshops "just cannot bear that much love." Individuals who challenge him, Kaminer says, are almost always presented in his books as wrong.

Peck and the other Protestant writers all stress strongly the need to surrender one's self to God. Peck maintains that "only two states of being [exist]: submission to God and goodness or the refusal to submit to anything beyond one's own will, which refusal automatically enslaves one to the forces of evil"—a proposition Kaminer finds "chilling." In people's "eagerness to submit," she remarks, "not everyone can distinguish God from the devil."

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

Crying No Wolf

"Biodiversity Studies: Science and Policy" by Paul R. Ehrlich and Edward O. Wilson, and "Extinction: Are Ecologists Crying Wolf?" by Charles C. Mann, in *Science* (Aug. 16, 1991), American Assoc. for the Advancement of Science, 1333 H St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Ecocatastrophe is not too strong a word for the specter raised by biologists Paul Ehrlich of Stanford and Edward Wilson of Harvard. The destruction of tropical rain forests and other natural habitats, they as-

sert, is accelerating the extinction of precious species of animals, plants, and microorganisms. Tropical deforestation alone, they calculate, now causes the loss of at least .2 percent of all species in the