

# Another Gospel

## A Survey of Cults and World Religions

### **Galatians 1:6-11**

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

NKJV

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*As always, dedicated with all of  
my love and thanks to Debbie  
and Becky, the truly special  
Christians in my life.*

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In addition to these books for more general coverage, books on individual cults or

religions, or groups of organizations, will be considered in specific chapters with full bibliographies in the footnotes.

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### **Matthew 7:15-23**

*15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 “You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 “Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

*21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture is quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982, unless otherwise noted.

## America Today?!?

According to the *Universal Almanac 1996*,<sup>2</sup> 86% of the US population defines themselves as Christians!

Let us stand and cheer!!!!!!!!!!

Of this group, according to the Almanac, 61% are Protestant and 25% are Roman Catholic.

The Protestants break down as follows:

- ✓ 34% Baptists
- ✓ 20% Methodists
- ✓ 13% Lutheran
- ✓ 7% Presbyterian
- ✓ 5% Episcopalian
- ✓ 21% “others”

According to the same Almanac, 2% of the US population is Jewish, 5% follow other faiths, and 7% are not affiliated with any religion.

The break down in Canada is almost the same, based upon their 1991 census. 85% of the Canadian population defines themselves as Christian.

- ✓ 54% Roman Catholic
- ✓ 43% Protestant
- ✓ 2% Eastern Orthodox
- ✓ 2% “other”

In Canada, the United Church of Canada and the Anglican Church of Canada are the largest Protestant denominations.

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<sup>2</sup>J. W. Wright, Ed., *The Universal Almanac*, 1996, Andrews & McMeel, Kansas City, 517; as quoted by <http://www.religioustolerance.org>.

Worldwide, according to the *1992 Encyclopedia Britannica Book of the Year*,<sup>3</sup> Christianity is the most widespread religion. Christians are put at 33.9% of the world's 1996 population, a figure that has been amazingly constant during the last half of the twentieth century. In relative terms, the growth of Christianity over the past 50 years has approximated the growth rate of the world's population.

Christianity competes with Bahai as the world's largest religion. The *Britannica* found significant Christian communities in 254 countries and territories, while Bahai is present in 205. Islam comes in a distant third with 172 locations.<sup>4</sup>

How did the statistics get to be so "Christian?" Many would rejoice over this "fact." But a review of the breakdown shows that Christian includes Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, New Thought, Mormons, Spiritualists, psychic, and New Age. All lumped under one umbrella. No wonder Christianity fares so well in these surveys.

To the *secular world* (as represented, for example by ReligiousTolerance.org) Christianity is comprised of three main movements, the Gnostic Christians, the Pauline Christians, and the Jewish Christians.

- ❑ The Jewish sect was headed by James, author of the Bible epistle, and included Jesus's original disciples. It disappears before the end of the first century.
- ❑ The Gnostic movement claims to have special and otherwise unknown secret knowledge (*gnosis*). Some were members of "mainline" congregations, others were not. The Gnostics were deemed to be "heretics" by the Church and were suppressed.
- ❑ This leaves only the "Pauline Christians." This is the "mainline" body of congregations, comprised largely of non-Jewish Christians. These groups were "created" by Paul and his missionary co-workers. The Bishop of Rome becomes the recognized head of this group and Siricius (384-399) claims the title of Pope for the first time.

In 1054 the Christian centers in Rome and Constantinople form a schism, over control issues and in particular the meaning of the Last Supper. The church at Rome eventually becomes the Roman Catholic Church. The Church at Constantinople becomes the Eastern Orthodox Church.

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<sup>3</sup>As quoted by <http://www.religioustolerance.org>.

<sup>4</sup>Greg H. Parsons, Exec. Dir., *U.S. Center for World Mission*, Pasadena, CA; quoted in Zondervan News Service, 1997-Feb-21, as quoted by <http://www.religioustolerance.org>.

The Roman Catholic Church is not truly formed, however, until the Reformation beginning in 1517. One must remember, whether you are reading secular history or a good history of the Christian church, that there is only one church from the Apostles to the 1054 schism. While the early church has many “centers,” such as Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria, Egypt, it is essentially a single church much like today’s large denominations. A church in Los Angeles may “practice” some things differently from one in Alexandria, Virginia, but it is all the same church. The break between East and West forms the first true fracture in the church, resulting in the creation of two Popes. Except for differences in certain rituals (what the Last Supper means, how you calculate the date of Easter), the real break was over the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

The reformation lead by Luther and Calvin takes on a different perspective. Luther attacked certain practices and beliefs of the organized church, together with the authority of the Pope. While Luther commenced his rebellion wanting the Church to be reformed, this was not possible with the abuses which were present in the organized Church. Luther, Calvin, and the rest of the reformers are driven by two fundamental beliefs, with a third implied.

*Sola Scriptura* – the absolute authority of the Bible in all matters of religious belief and practice

The Priesthood of all Believers – there is no need for a professional priesthood to act as an intermediary between believer and God.

The implied right of all Christians to read the Bible for themselves.

The last two points, in particular, open the door for individuals and groups to interpret the Bible in their own unique ways. This leads to the formation of new “denominations.” From Luther has come the Lutheran Church. From Calvin has come the Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, and United Church of Christ. From the European reformers come the Amish, Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers, among others. A “mini” reform in England will lead to the Anglican, Episcopalian, and Methodist families of congregations.

The Baptist tradition generally traces its roots to three sources, all arising from disagreements with the Reformers such as Luther. The biggest source of disagreement was probably the issue of baptism – when and who, but also, at times, how – although a careful study reveals other areas of disagreement as well. The movement followed the teachings reflected in the writings of such individuals and groups as John Wycliffe (c.1320-1384), John Hus (c.1372-1415), Balthasar Hubmaier (c.1480-1528), *The Shleitheim Confession* (1527) of the Swiss Anabaptists, Martin

Bucer (c.1494-55), and Menno Simons (1496-1561) help to form the groups now referred to as Baptist. Throughout their history, Baptists have sought to avoid creedal statements in favor of descriptive expressions (sermons) of their faith. While part of the Reformation, the Baptists were more of the rebels of the groups than part of the mainstream.

In the modern world, many of these groups subdivided for a variety of valid and invalid reasons. The Eastern Orthodox church is now comprised of about fifteen branches, mirroring the effects of the various countries where it is prominent and the attitude of the respective governments (i.e., Greek, Russian, Serbian). ReligiousTolerance.org estimates there to be 1,200 Protestant religious organizations, at least under its definition.

So, is American Christian?

As we shall see, much of the answer depends upon whether one's definitions are tolerant enough to accommodate a large number of varied beliefs.

**Matthew 22:14**

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

These are the Words of Christ. If one accepts the teaching of the Bible, few of the professing Christians in the USA, indeed, in the world, are *Christianos*, that is, followers or partisans of Christ.

So, come along into the world of the cults . . .

## Examples and Consequences

On Friday, March 17, 2000, in Kanungu, located in the southern portion of Uganda, the approximately 330 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God moved toward their church. This was not an unusual event and the people of the village watched, probably with some amusement over the strange and strict habits of the church members. But this day would be different from other church gatherings. For on this day, suddenly and without warning, the village was startled by the blast of an inferno from the church. The fire was swift and deadly. When the blaze was ultimately extinguished and investigated, the entire church was found to have committed mass suicide. The reasons behind this tragedy remain unclear.

Further, as the investigation continued, it was determined that some cult members had apparently been killed prior to the fire. The Roman Catholic bishops of Uganda issued a statement saying that the sect members “were misled by obsessed leaders into an obnoxious form of religiosity completely rejected by the Catholic Church.” Sect leaders included several defrocked Catholic priests and nuns. Catholic-like icons were found at the movement’s church.<sup>5</sup>

A related story from the BBC carried interviews and comments from the reading audience over the meaning of cults. To quote from the related story,

“The dividing line between a cult and a religion is often difficult to draw. Are cults a danger to society or just to themselves? Do we have a right to restrict their activities or should members have the right to die as they chose?”

Comments to consider in response to this discussion question include:

✍ Are all you people crazy? Every religion throughout history was once considered a cult. The Romans considered Christianity a cult. Before you judge anyone’s form of religion, remember a majority of the people considered your religion a cult. Try using your brains!

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<sup>5</sup>Information taken from various news articles at BBC News Online: World: Africa, <http://news.bbc.co.uk>. Later news stories report the finding of even more graves (100+).

- ✍ My best friend joined a cult ten years ago whilst studying in Paris. They have branches in the UK and all over the world. They aren't a "doomsday" cult but still deprive my friend and thousands of others of her free will, and make extortionate demands on money and time. Our children need to be taught about how cults recruit vulnerable young people – at the moment the authorities seem unprepared to do anything against this growing menace.
- ✍ I am a member of the Christadelphians and we are termed a "cult" by mainstream Christianity, even though we do not display any cultish behaviour but simply for the fact that we reject the non-Biblical doctrine of the Trinity. This is why banning "cults" is dangerous and a more rigid definition of what should be banned is needed, i.e. that they display antisocial behaviours. A good case can be made for saying mainstream Christianity, a religion which is based on the philosophy of man (and not the Bible, and certainly not the true Jesus of the Bible) can be made – would anyone think of banning that?
- ✍ I am a member of a church which is called a "cult" by some other Christians. When they find out that I am from this "cult" they try to teach me the Gospel to dispel my cultish delusions. I appreciate their concern for my salvation, and at least they are not like those who used to burn "heretics" at the stake. However, it has made me very cautious about calling any religious group a "cult" because I see how easy it is for people of one religion to be prejudiced against others and to believe all sorts of untrue things about them.
- ✍ Every cult must have a basic creed or a set of codes which regulates its belief or activities. These determine whether this cult is ethical or evil.
- ✍ Mass suicides by cult members simply show the religious bankruptcy of our modern society.
- ✍ At least cults turn their irrationality inwards. The deaths caused by cults are insignificant compared to the damage caused by mainstream religion.

A couple of thoughts are brought home by these comments. First, the world is spiritually bankrupt. This comes across whether one is Christian or something else. Just review the feelings expressed above.

Second, cults are dangerous – but the danger lies in different areas for differing religious views. Some fear the social differences. Other fear the death results from events such as Uganda. For the Christian, the difference lies in the knowledge that those not following Jesus Christ will spend eternity in a state of punishment and torment.

A third factor apparent from the entire line of quotes is the new tolerance which is

being built into society. Each must respect the others rights, so long as they do not harm the other person. Thus, organized religion is seen as evil because it forces itself on the individual, demanding a decision against both the individual and society. Any cult, on the other hand, is not evil, because the individual has chosen to join and nothing is forced on society. That the individual may die is irrelevant because “that event does not affect me!”

One other point should be apparent from the above discussion – everyone uses the same terms, but what is meant by a cult has different meanings for different people. But, if things go “bad” all of society thinks the group is a cult. In other words, a cult is a group which does not do things the way “society” would want. And, frequently, the results are tragic. Working backwards from Uganda, consider the following:

- ✍ March 1997, 39 members of Heaven’s Gate followers poison themselves believing a UFO would pick them up
- ✍ October 1994, 48 members of the Order of the Solar Temple commit mass suicide, most by fire, in Switzerland. Other bodies are found in Canada. More deaths are found in 1995 and 1997. Some of the victims are apparently shot or asphyxiated. The cult’s motto was “Money, Sex and Joy.”
- ✍ October 1993, 53 hill tribe villagers die using primitive weapons in Vietnam. They are led by a blind man.
- ✍ February 1993, 86 members of Branch Davidian are killed in a “fiery apocalypse” predicted by the groups leader David Koresh. The fire occurs as federal authorities storm the compound to end a 51 day siege. An investigation into the cause of the blaze is still on-going.
- ✍ The worse comes in 1979 in Guyana, South America. The People’s Temple is founded by Jim Jones in 1957. Jones considered himself the reincarnation of both Jesus and Lenin. Based upon visions of impending nuclear holocaust, he led his followers to a jungle portion of Guyana, building a dream community named Jonestown. Two years later 638 adults and 276 children are ordered to drink cyanide juice. Those who resisted or tried to escape are shot. Jones himself died of a bullet wound to the head.

Society views these cults as scary and of great concern. And, certainly, they are. But what of the millions of people lost to false religions, people who never discover God, people who will spend eternity in a state of punishment and separation from God? These are the cults which this course will address, for these people can be saved. If we can witness to them and address their needs, the Christian community can save some souls for God’ kingdom. But it is a difficult struggle, for, as the reactions above suggest, most of the world views Jesus and religion differently than the true Christian. The true believer is in the minority.



The Christ of the Gospels is certainly the best-known Jesus in the world. For Christians, he is utterly unique – the only Son of God and, as the pope put it, the one “mediator between God and humanity.” But alongside this Jesus is another, the Jesus whom Muslims since Muhammad have regarded as a prophet and messenger of Allah. And after centuries of silence about Jesus, many Jews now find him a Jewish teacher and reformer they can accept on their own terms as “one of us.”

Jesus has become a familiar, even beloved, figure to adherents of Asian religions as well. Among many contemporary Hindus, Jesus has come to be revered as a self-realized saint who reached the highest level of “God-consciousness.” In recent years, Buddhists like the Dalai Lama have recognized in Jesus a figure of great compassion much like the Buddha. “I think as the world grows smaller, Jesus as a figure will grow larger,” says Protestant theologian John Cobb, a veteran of interfaith dialogues.

Perhaps. Each of these traditions – Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism – is rich in its own right, and each has its own integrity. As the pope calls for better understanding among the world’s great religions, it is important to recognize that non-Christian faiths have their own visions of the sacred and their own views of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

This is the position faced by the modern Christian. Religious tolerance has become the buzz word of the day. Everyone has adopted Jesus in some form, therefore, everyone should be able to talk to everyone else on some meaningful level. The term for all of this is “pluralism.” Pluralism is religious tolerance at the extreme which says that all roads lead to heaven, regardless of the path. To the world view, everyone gets to God, as long as everyone remembers that the religion next door may get there too. When the religion next door starts to claim theirs as the only path, there is no tolerance. To quote from the same Newsweek article:

But there is at least one unbridgeable difference: a Christian can never become Christ, while the aim of every serious Buddhist is to achieve Buddhahood himself.

Put this into other terms – the goal of almost every religion is to achieve god-hood, to be a little god! Again, quoting from the same article,

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<sup>6</sup>Newsweek.com: Newsweek US Edition: Society, <http://newsweek.com/>, March 27, 2000, “*The Other Jesus*,” by Kenneth L. Woodward, written in conjunction with the visit of Pope John Paul II to Israel, Jordan, and the surrounding area.

Clearly, the cross is what separates the Christ of Christianity from every other Jesus. In Judaism there is no precedent for a Messiah who dies, much less as a criminal as Jesus did. In Islam, the story of Jesus' death is rejected as an affront to Allah himself. Hindus can accept only a Jesus who passes into peaceful samadhi, a yogi who escapes the degradation of death. The figure of the crucified Christ, says Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh, "is a very painful image to me. It does not contain joy or peace, and this does not do justice to Jesus." There is, in short, no room in other religions for a Christ who experiences the full burden of mortal existence – and hence there is no reason to believe in him as the divine Son whom the Father resurrects from the dead.

Even so, there are lessons all believers can savor by observing Jesus in the mirrors of Jews and Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists. That the image of a benign Jesus has universal appeal should come as no surprise. That most of the world cannot accept the Jesus of the cross should not surprise, either. Thus the idea that Jesus can serve as a bridge uniting the world's religions is inviting but may be ultimately impossible. A mystery to Christians themselves, Jesus remains what he has always been, a sign of contradiction.

This should all come as no surprise to the Christian. Jesus is the Son of God and the only way to eternal life with the Father. There will be no bridge uniting the world's religions. There is a clear choice, Jesus or anything else. The world does not understand this. The key concept of the Pope's Middle East trip, again, as summed up by Newsweek was "Reconciliation, a key word in the Christian vocabulary . . . the goal of Pope John Paul II's turn-of-the-millennium activity. . . Reconciling does not mean giving up identity, whether in families or religions. . . Reconciling means becoming liberated from the confining, obsessive desires to keep score, to seek revenge, to prolong hostility."<sup>7</sup>

This is the world's view of what we are about to talk about. As Paul writes,

#### **2 Timothy 4:3-4**

*3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*

It would seem this time is here!

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<sup>7</sup>Newsweek.com: Newsweek US Edition: Society, <http://newsweek.com/> March 27, 2000, "The Long Road to Reconciliation," by Martin Marty.

Yet, none of this is new –

**Ecclesiastes 1:9**

*That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.*

King Solomon, King of Israel, writing around 935 B.C.

**Ephesians 4:17-19**

*17 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; 19 who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

Paul the Apostle, writing around A.D. 60

Satan has no new tricks. Like Madison Avenue, he just repackages the same old products!!!

Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than truth itself.

Irenaeus  
*Against Heresies* 1.2<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>(c. 175-195), *Bishop of Lyons in southern France; one of the most important Christian writers of the second century*. Irenaeus grew up in Asia Minor under the preaching of the apostolic father Polycarp and moved to southern France, becoming "elder" (presbyter) in Lyons. When the aging bishop was martyred, Irenaeus succeeded him as bishop in the West. In his primary work, *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus gave his theology as statements of the Christian faith to refute the heresies of Valentinus (the Gnostic) and Marcion.

**John 14:6**

*6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

**1 Timothy 4:1**

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*



America alone has more than 350 sects and cults, and most of them claim to base their doctrines on the Word of God.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Tan, Paul Lee, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996, Logos Electronic Edition.

## Religion and Other False Doctrines

350 sects and cults – all claiming to rely upon the Word of God –

This is a picture of religion today. It is a picture of deceiving spirits and devilish doctrines. Unfortunately, many of these doctrines are right next door. The trick is to distinguish between what is good and what is evil, to develop a discerning spirit.

Religion might be defined as “that aspect of one’s experience in which he attempts to live harmoniously with the power or powers he believes are controlling the world.”<sup>10</sup> In this sense, religion becomes definable as possessing a series of traits which we should all recognize:

- ✍ Religion is universal
- ✍ Religion meets needs.
- ✍ Practices of worship are varied.
- ✍ All religions are not the same.

Yet, in this modern age, this last characteristic is the true dividing line, for most desire to see that all roads do, indeed, lead to God.

Notice, first, that religion implies man’s need for a creator or higher power. Man either cannot or does not stand alone in the universe. Man needs God.

Secondly, the universality of religion shows the distinction of man from the animal world and the unity of the human race. Animals live on instincts. Animals do not form vast societies or social structures. Animals do not “seek God.” All men seek some God.

Third, religion does help to meet needs. Groups offer solutions to evil, groups help support us through troubles. Groups attempt to improve the quality of life. They

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<sup>10</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today’s Religions*, San Bernardino, California: Campus Crusade for Christ published by Here’s Life Publishers, Inc., 1983, 11.

offer the hope of a “better tomorrow,” they provide the outlines of an ideal society. They even attempt to set in place a working plan of salvation. Or so they claim.

## Flavors of God

It is this last element which creates the stumbling block between religions. All religions do not eventually reach the same God. As we see, there is no uniform definition of God or the salvation He offers. To better keep all of this in perspective, here is a set of definitions, the “isms” of religion. In general, this list sets forth the umbrella of all religions.

**THEOLOGY** is the study of God. This, in turn, has led man to define beliefs in God in general “catch-all” terms. There is some benefit to understanding these terms, at least in broad concepts. It will help us place religions together as to their overall world views of God.

**ATHEISM**, outright denial of the existence of God, is a position that many claim to hold. If you are an atheist, you believe that man is alone and life is meaningless. This is the Soviet cosmonaut’s view of the universe (“I can’t see God, so He must not exist.”). It is contradicted by evidence in nature, the conscience, and the spiritual makeup of the individual, as well as by biblical teaching. At heart, it is a rejection of the self-revelation of the personal God of the Bible, who has on innumerable occasions communicated with human beings for their benefit. Many people are practical atheists because they have not bothered to inquire about the existence and character of God.

**AGNOSTICISM**, the belief that one cannot know if God exists or not, amounts to a suspension of knowledge. As with atheism, it rejects the many self-disclosures of God. It is an affront to the God Who has spoken, is based on pride, and offers no hope for life now or after death. Both positions are contrary to the basic makeup of human beings, who desperately need contact with their Creator and have the spiritual capacity to interact with Him.

**PANTHEISM** is an often sophisticated but actually illogical view of God. It denies the existence of a personal God who interacts intelligently with human beings. Instead, God is the same thing as the universe, and, in turn, the universe is God. Of course, in this view we are part of God and He is part of us. If you are a pantheist, then you have to conclude that at any given moment you are sitting or standing on God! It actually sacrifices God’s personhood for His infinity, and, in some forms of the view, makes God physical, although in some

variations everything is supposedly nonmaterial and spiritual, including the universe. Pantheism is an attempt to reduce God to identity with His creation.

**POLYTHEISM**, the belief in a plurality of gods (equal or differing in rank) is prevalent throughout the world, as is pantheism. This view clearly contradicts the biblical teaching that there is only one deity and that He is unique in power and position. In polytheism in general, the adherent can never know if he has pleased the right god. We might call this the Alka-Seltzer view of God. Like a medicine that covers all the bases, polytheism, by encouraging placating all the gods to obtain favor, assuages the conscience—at least it attempts to!

**DEISM** is the view that God exists and can interact with human beings, but has withdrawn from contact with them. In some forms it involves denial of a Trinity, the incarnation, miracles, and other orthodox doctrines.<sup>11</sup>

**MONOTHEISM** is the belief in only one God, a God who is active in the universe. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are the only monotheistic religions.

**MONISM** is the belief of all-in-one. It is the unity of all reality, not the belief in a single God. It is similar in results to pantheism.

As stated above, it is the ecumenical thrust of a universal type of salvation which is the clear stumbling block between Christianity and all other world religions. To most religions, “salvation” is equated to “sameness,” a set of identical (or almost identical) morals or “goodness structure.” This shows a clear lacking of definition of salvation. This salvation is an improvement toward the ideal moral position. This approach assumes that there is a general sense in which the human race defines morals or human goodness. It also assumes there is progress toward such definition.

In modern terms, this trend toward the same god is called “**PLURALISM**.” I quote at length from an article by John Hick which demonstrates the definitional problem salvation.

If we define salvation as being forgiven and accepted by God because of Jesus’ death on the cross, then it becomes a tautology that Christianity alone knows and is able to preach the source of salvation. But if we define salvation as an actual human change, a gradual

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<sup>11</sup>Paul S. Karleen, *The Handbook to Bible Study*, (New York: Oxford University Press) 1987.



transformation from natural self-centeredness (with all the human evils that flow from this) to a radically new orientation centered in God and manifested in the “fruit of the Spirit,” then it seems clear that salvation is taking place within all of the world religions – and taking place, so far as we can tell, to more or less the same extent. On this view, which is not based on theological theory but on the observable realities of human life, salvation is not a juridical transaction inscribed in heaven, or is it a future hope beyond this life (although it is this too), but it is a spiritual, moral, and political change that can begin now and whose present possibility is grounded in the structure of reality.<sup>12</sup>

How does Hick maintain this position? It is not as difficult as it might first appear. And, it is characteristic of all the fights on Christianity. Notice, first, that this is an argument from reason and experience. Man needs a god, but that god does not have to be very powerful – or popular. He is just “there.” Second, that god may have imparted some information to us in the form of revelations, for Hick uses the language of Scripture, “fruit of the Spirit.” But, the real change is in the definition of salvation. Salvation is not the process of becoming right with God. Salvation is the process of becoming a better human being – a person better able to operate in the spiritual, moral, and political world. One might well ask what the political world has to do with one’s salvation? Do we all need to belong to the same political party?

Hick, and all those like him, dismiss the Bible as the only true word of God. They define worship in terms of paying homage not to “God,” but to one of any number of series of manifestations of God to humanity. So, Moses helps to bring about one such manifestation. Jesus is another. But so are Mohammed and Buddha, and several others. And since they all generally preach the same moral code, salvation must be tied to this code.

Scripture tells us to expect such diversity in religious practice. Look at what Paul foresaw when he wrote to Timothy.

#### **1 Timothy 4:1-6**

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,<sup>2</sup> speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,<sup>3</sup> forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

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<sup>12</sup>Dennis L. Okholm & Timothy R. Phillips, Gen. Eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, John Hick, *A Pluralist View*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995, 1996, 43.

Or, in the Apostle's second letter to his spiritual son.

## **2 Timothy 3:1-10**

*But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! 6 For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; 9 but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.*

This passage gives us the first of three definitions we need to keep clear in our minds as we look at various cults and world religions.

The first of these is **APOSTASY** – the continual falling away of people from God. It is a denial of God, not a perversion to His Word. In classical Greek, *apostasia* is a technical term for political revolt or defection. The Septuagint relates the term and definition to rebellion against God (Joshua 22:22; 2 Chron 29:19) as originally instigated by Satan, the apostate dragon of Job 26:13.

◀ The term is used twice in the New Testament, once in Acts 21:21 and again in 2 Thess 2:3. In the second instance it calls the coming of the Anti-Christ, the man of sin, the great apostasy.

◀ “Apostasy is generally defined as the determined, willful rejection of Christ and His teachings by a Christian believer (Heb. 10:26–29; John 15:22). This is different from false belief, or error, which is the result of ignorance.”<sup>13</sup>

Most of the arguments of pluralism ultimately reflect the view point of apostasy, for they reject God totally as He is presented in Scripture. They reject the overall concepts of the God of the Bible. But notice that the modern trend of religion is to treat apostate religions and cultic religions as still reaching the same goal.

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<sup>13</sup>Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary: An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations* [computer file], electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1995, 1997.

## Cults

On the other hand, knowing that Jesus is God, Satan has provided some intermediate steps for those who are not yet ready to totally reject the God of the Bible. These are the cults. Paul foresees these as well.

### 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

*13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

A **CULT**, then, is a perversion or distortion of biblical Christianity. It is a rejection of the historic teachings of the Christian church. A cult is a group of people based upon someone's interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations from orthodox Christian beliefs. As we will see, this deviation is particularly concerned with the Trinity and the Person of Jesus Christ.

But, if cults are a perversion, why do they flourish? Some suggested answers include:

- ✍ They provide answers to all those "life" questions – Who am I? Why am I here?
- ✍ They meet human needs – the needs to be loved, to be needed, to share direction and meaning in our lives.
- ✍ They fulfill the need to know and serve God.
- ✍ They make a favorable impression. They give the appearance of knowing what they are talking about.

To understand the cults, and to fight them, it is necessary to understand two other terms – orthodoxy and heresy.

## Canon - the Standard

**ORTHODOXY** is the method of referring to the standard of beliefs held by the Church of Christ. It is the list of "doctrines" believed to be truth.

**DOCTRINE** — a body of beliefs about God, humankind, Christ, the church, and other related concepts considered authoritative and thus

worthy of acceptance by all members of the community of faith.<sup>14</sup>

**ORTHODOX** comes from two Greek words which mean “right” and “honor.” Thus, the term orthodox in Christian usage means to rightly honor God. It may be viewed as meaning that one should rightly accept and obey all of the foundational teachings of the Bible.

Those who corrupt the foundations of orthodoxy are called heretics. The Greek words from which we get “**HERESY**” and “**HERETIC**” simply mean to “act of choice” or “an attachment.” Thus, in Christian terms, a heresy is a false doctrine – but not just a false doctrine. Rather, it is a false doctrine so important to those who believe it, that it must be considered an abandonment of the faith.

Harold O. J. Brown, in his work *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*<sup>15</sup>, argues that theologians have developed the statements of orthodoxy because of the attacks on the church, that is because of the heresies. He reviews the development of doctrine throughout church history and concludes that there is no method of defining heresy in today’s church since there is no existing standard of orthodoxy. Brown’s arguments miss the mark, for the look to the standards of the church rather than the standards of God and the Bible. Scripture clearly sets forth certain universal beliefs which must be followed in order to be saved and become a child of God. These are the Statements of Faith issued by the bodies involved.

For example, here is the **Calvary Road Baptist Church** *Statement of Faith* as it is displayed on the Church’s WEB site (<http://www.crbc.org>).

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<sup>14</sup>Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary: An authoritative one-volume reference work on the Bible with full color illustrations* [computer file], electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson’s illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1995, 1997.

<sup>15</sup>Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: Heresy and Orthodoxy in the History of the Church*, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984, 1988.

## **What We Believe...**

- ◆ We believe the Bible is God's Holy Word. It is unique from all other literature in that, without error, it is the final authority on truth. (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21)
- ◆ We believe in only one living and true God. We believe that in the Godhead there are three personal distinctions: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. (1 Peter 1:2; Matthew 28:19)
- ◆ We believe they are co equal in power and glory, identical in their essential natures, characteristics, and perfection and that they are co-eternal. (Genesis 1:2; John 17:5)
- ◆ We believe the Bible reveals Jesus Christ as "being the eternal Son of God, became man" (Hebrews 2:16; John 1:14; Luke 1:35)
- ◆ We believe that Jesus reveals to us the nature of God and teaches us about our own nature, which is utterly sinful. Our sin separates us from God, who created us to have fellowship with Him. The Bible teaches us that no amount of "good works" will ever make us acceptable to God (Romans 5:6-8)
- ◆ We believe the Bible teaches that God extends grace, though we do not deserve it, can not earn it, and can never repay it through the death and resurrection of His Son (John 3:16)
- ◆ We believe that Jesus Christ is God born a man. We believe that He lived a sinless life and died to pay the penalty for our sins. He rose bodily from the grave and gives eternal life to those who believe in Him. (Acts 16: 31; Romans 10:9,10)
- ◆ As believers, we depend upon the Holy Spirit to do what we could never do before; bring glory to God and love and serve men. (Ephesians 5:23; Ephesians 2:8-9).

The Statements of Faith of all churches and denominations will not read exactly like this one. Some will be more complex, others simpler. Some will contain terms that Baptists do not agree with (speaking in tongues or baptism by sprinkling). The key to orthodoxy is to identify those statements which are indispensable to the Christian faith. What we will find is that such statements generally address either the status of the Bible in one's faith or the place, status, and person of Jesus Christ. It is these areas where most cults will "wander" from orthodoxy, becoming heretical.

## What's in the Language?

Why this emphasis on doctrine? One of the traits of most cults is to use the same terminology we use in Christianity. The terms – salvation, redemption, Jesus, even Bible – are all used. The difference is that the cults have redefined the terms giving them meanings to match their beliefs. We need to understand this and to learn what the terms should mean to us. In this fashion, we can learn to dissect the arguments of the cultists and, then, to present to them a clear gospel message.

### **1 Peter 3:15**

*15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*

This language issue is extremely important, for some cults will appear to quote and agree with Scripture! But, this is not the real case, for Scripture to the cultist has a completely different meaning than it does to YOU! To quote from the authoritative book on cults:

The average non-Christian cult owes its very existence to the fact that it has utilized the terminology of Christianity, has borrowed liberally from the Bible, almost always out of context, and sprinkled its format with evangelical cliches and terms wherever possible or advantageous. Up to now this has been a highly successful attempt to represent their respective systems of thought as “Christian.” On encountering a cultist then, always remember that you are dealing with a person who is familiar with Christian terminology, and who has carefully redefined it to fit the system of thought he or she now embraces.<sup>16</sup>

An example of the semantics problem in a “non” cult situation is the use of the word “sect.” Frequently, this word is used as a way to distinguish between denominations or various parts of the “church.” This is especially true with the Roman Catholic Church which uses the term as an equivalent to denomination. Liberal Protestant writers will frequently use the term in the same fashion. However, it is more properly the equivalent of cult, since it is a term which distinguishes groups based upon the doctrinal beliefs of that group. Accordingly, we will use the term “sect” as being equivalent to “cult.” Contrary to this, the pluralist is likely to use the word sect as the equivalent to all religions. See the problems?

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<sup>16</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, Revised, 1985, 20.

## Psycho-ology

Lastly, aside from the “theological” differences, the cults possess certain general psychological characteristics that Christians must recognize and deal with.

- ✍ First, the belief systems of the cults are closed-minded. There is no rational evaluation process involved in accepting the facts. It is more a matter of brain washing and indoctrination. The belief systems are those of the founder and they exist in isolation.
- ✍ Second, the cultic belief system has a genuine antagonism on a personal level for Christianity. The message is identified with the messenger.
- ✍ Third, the cultist feels he or she has been freed from the bonds of religious exploitation.
- ✍ Fourth, the cultist belief system manifests an institutional dogmatism for any position but their own. They are right – you are wrong!
- ✍ Fifth, cults offer New Teachings, indicated as the only true teaching. Many of these teachings are focused on the future, apocalyptic in nature.
- ✍ Sixth, cult leaders are strong willed and controlling.
- ✍ Seventh, the cults maintain control through dependence, isolation, brainwashing, substitution of the cult for mother, father, priest, teacher, healer, and lover, indebtedness, guilt, and often via threats..

### 1 Timothy 3:16

*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:  
God was manifested in the flesh,  
Justified in the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Preached among the Gentiles,  
Believed on in the world,  
Received up in glory.*

So, what makes a cult? Cults all claim special revelation and privilege. Those who use the Bible invariably distort the interpretation of Scripture to fit their own beliefs and interpretations. This is always contrary to the orthodox view. In the end, cults take the three basic **essential doctrines** of the Bible and either add to them, subtract from them, or do both at the same time. The **essential doctrines** are shown in 1 Timothy 3:16 – the Deity of Christ, which involves the Trinity, the Resurrection, and Salvation by Grace. These are the doctrines which Christianity unique among the religions of the world. These are the doctrines of true faith. These are the truth of

God.

## Should we judge?

Is it fair to pronounce another religious group false? Do Christians have the right to call a cult wrong? Or does “tolerance” demand that Christians accept the slight changes to God’s Word that these various groups make?

Two passages might be suggested as biblical starting points. One was quoted earlier, 1 Peter 3:15. That passage is used to form the basis of all Christian apologetics, the arguments for Christianity. But beyond this, we are to earnestly contend for the faith, for the doctrines handed down from Christ to the Apostles.

### **Jude 3**

*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you **exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

But, beyond contending, we are to examine what we are taught.

### **Acts 17:11**

*These [the Bereans] were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.*

### **1 Thessalonians 5:21**

*Test all things; hold fast what is good.*

The Bible is the watershed of religion. If it is true, the Word of God governs all things, and any judgment honestly based upon its teachings is valid. We must accept God’s Word and fight to protect it, at any and all costs. The cults are wrong. When the kingdom of Israel split into Northern and Southern kingdoms, Jeroboam established a “look-alike” religion in the North to help the people to stay focused on God (and not to stray into the Southern kingdom on high holidays and defect!). Some two hundred years later when the Northern kingdom is carried into captivity, Scripture records that one of the major reasons for this punishment was the continuing practice of the Northern Jews to follow the “golden calf cult.”

### **2 Kings 17:16-18**

*16 So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, **made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.** 17 And they*



*caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.<sup>18</sup> Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.*

## Who Are The Cults?

There are many ways to answer this question. As we have seen, part of the answer depends upon the definition. But, if one starts with a conservative Christian perspective, the list starts to grow quickly. Also, as we have discovered, there are a lot of groups in the USA, and in the world, for that matter, which should be classified as a cult. The list may well be endless. One list is the outline page of these materials. Here is the list of cults as found on the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry WEB site<sup>17</sup>:

Alamo Christian Foundation	Life Spring
Anthroposophical Society	Mormonism
Astara	Rosicrucianism
Children of God	Scientology
Christadelphianism	Self Realization Fellowship
Christian Identity Movement	Silva Mind Control
Christian Science	Swedenborgianism
Church of the Living Word	The Farm
Church of Armageddon	The Unification Church
Divine Light Mission	The Way International
Eckankar	Theosophy
Est	Two by Two's
Foundation of Human Understanding	Transcendental Meditation
(Roy Masters)	Unitarian Universalist Association
Jehovah's Witnesses	Unity School of Christianity
Krishna	Urantia

We probably will not look at all of these, while at the same time, we will study some religions not on this list, either because they are not Christian “cults” or because they peak my interest more so than some of these. Come along on this trip through the cults . . .

The next page, from the same WEB site, is a comparison chart of the some of the major cults. Please take a moment to study it carefully. The overall pattern, if not the details, is the same for all cults.

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.carm.org>, as of March 30, 2000.

## Mormonism

“As god once was, man is. As God is, man may become.”  
Lorenzo Snow, President of the LDS<sup>18</sup>

Known officially as:  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Also known as the LDS

“Mormonism is one of the most effective counterfeits of biblical Christianity ever devised.”<sup>19</sup>  
Kenneth Boa

Did you ever get visited by an angel? If you did, how would you act?

If you haven't, how do you think you would act?

Would you be in awe? And, what if the purpose of the visit was to receive great, new revelation from God? What would you do with it? How would it change your life?

Well, as an example, consider the example of Joseph Smith, Jr. . . .  
a man who claimed such a visit, and more!

## History

Born on December 23, 1805, in Vermont, Smith followed after his father, a fortune hunter and seeker of buried treasure. His mother was said to have been highly superstitious. Did this affect the young Smith?

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<sup>18</sup>As quoted in *Mormonism in a Nutshell*, <http://www.carm.org>

<sup>19</sup>Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990,

When he was 14, Smith claims a visit by none less than God the Father and Jesus. They told Smith not to join any of the denominational churches. This visit occurred at a time when the young man was praying in the woods over his concerns and confusion about all of the different denominations.

Three years later, the angel Moroni visited the teenager. Moroni was the son of Mormon, the leader of a people called the Nephites, a people who lived in America. The angel's message was to deliver golden plates to Smith on which were written the *Book of Mormon*. The book was hidden around Palmyra, New York, where Smith was then living. The book had been written in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century by Mormon. Smith claims to have received the golden plates about four years later (1827). The translating process took about three years. During this period of translation, Smith claimed that he was visited by John the Baptist, who ordained him for the divine work of restoring the true church by preaching the true gospel, a gospel which had been lost from the earth. This true church is the original church of the Apostles from the first century.

The *Book of Mormon* is the account of people who came from the Middle-East to the Americas. It covers the period of about 600 B.C. to 400 A.D. and tells of the Jaredites, people from the Tower of Babel who came to central America but perished because of their own immorality. It also describes some Jews who fled persecution in Jerusalem and came to America led by a man called Nephi. The Jews divided into two groups known as the Nephites and Lamanites who fought each other.

The Nephites were defeated in 428 A.D. The Lamanites continued and are known as the American Indians. Their red skin was punishment for their having defeated the Nephi. The *Book of Mormon* is the account of the Nephite leader, Mormon, concerning their culture, civilization, and appearance of Jesus to the Americas. Jesus Himself is said to have come to America following His Resurrection where He performed many miracles, delivered a sermon ala the Beatitudes, and appointed twelve disciples from the Nephi tribe.

After the publication of this book, the group began to grow, but it had a very stormy history. The history is primarily the result of the varied teachings which are so deviant from Christianity. These include a plurality of gods, polygamy, and the theories on the priesthood. While many of these traits attracted members, they also brought a great deal of trouble. Of particular concern in the various societies in which Smith lived, the issue of polygamy created the greatest problems. Smith himself is said to have had twenty-seven wives. Smith and his group were forced to move from New York to Ohio, to Missouri, and finally to Nauvoo, Illinois. There, Smith and his brother were arrested for destroying a printing press which had been used to publish negative comments about the Mormons. A mob broke into the jail, killing both Smith and his brother.

At this point, the church divides into two groups, a fact not recognized by many

Americans. The first group was led by one of Smith's widows. This group returned to Independence, Missouri and are known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They, of course, claim to be the true church and true successor to Smith's organization. Independence is the city of choice, because this is the spot to which Jesus will return at his Second Coming. The Reorganized church was officially established in 1860 with Joseph Smith III being its first president and prophet.

The other group was led by Brigham Young. They ended up in Salt Lake, founding the city in 1847. Young is said to have had twenty-five wives and became very wealthy. At the time Young arrived at Salt Lake, the territory was still a part of Mexico, although it would shortly be ceded to the U.S. In 1851, President Millard Fillmore appointed Young the governor of the Utah Territory. However, six years later, President James Buchanan had to send US troops into Utah to quiet anti-Mormon protests. This action led to a non-Mormon governor being appointed.<sup>20</sup>

By 1860, Mormonism had grown to about 80,000. Its membership would double in the next twenty years. During this time, Utah would grant women the right to vote and Brigham Young University would be founded. Further, Congress would pass the Morrill Act which prohibited plural marriages. The Act would not be enforced in Utah. In 1882, the Edmunds Act is passed imposing very stiff penalties on polygamy. This action drives many of the Mormon leaders into hiding. Five years later, Congress passes the Edmunds-Tucker Act which dissolves the Corporate entity of the LDS. The church property is seized under the terms of this Act. Three years later (1890), all Mormons in the US are disenfranchised, regardless of whether they practiced polygamy or not. This forces the church leaders to issue a Manifesto instructing the members to obey the anti-polygamy laws.

Utah becomes a state on January 4, 1896. Four years later, at the turn of the century, the church claims a membership of 268,000 members.

There are several other books of importance to the Mormon Church besides the *Book of Mormon*. In 1967 the original Egyptian papyrus from which Joseph Smith claimed to have translated one of these, the *Book of Abraham*, is "rediscovered." Experts dispute this claim, finding the work to be a funeral text not related to Abraham.

In 1990, the Mormon church claimed a membership of eight million, with 43,000 full time missionaries in the field. The Temple in Salt Lake City claimed over 4.7 million

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<sup>20</sup>There were other "black marks" on the Mormon history. Young, in his desire to control Utah, in 1857, ordered Bishop John D. Lee the task of annihilating a wagon train of over 100 virtually helpless, non-Mormon immigrants in what became known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Some twenty years after the event, Lee would be convicted and executed for the event.

visitors. By the end of millennium, the LDS claimed a membership of over ten million members in more than 20,000 churches existing in 150 countries. The church claims its membership has doubled every fifteen years since 1945.<sup>21</sup>

Why does it grow?

Mormonism is growing because it provides significant benefits. It offers social security – the church always takes care of the needs of its people. It strives to build the family unit and provides many programs for Mormon youth (scouting, recreation, dances). This results in a very low rate of juvenile delinquency. The church challenges its laymen to be actively involved and provides a host of things for them to do. Mormonism is pervaded with the idea that everything practiced in the church is a result of divine revelation. These are appeals the evangelical Christian church ought to have.<sup>22</sup>

## Doctrines

Like many cults, Mormonism is a blend of elements drawn from various religions, including man's imagination. There is an eternal progression similar to the Eastern religions whereby man becomes a part of god. As such, the Mormons see Christ as the first man-god, just as the good Mormon will become a man-god. There is progression into Eternity followed by the good Mormon, which is dependent, among other things, on whether one were married in the Temple!

The Mormon's distort many of the essential doctrines of Christianity.

First, God the Father has a body. Walter Martin quotes Brigham Young: "Adam is our father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do."<sup>23</sup> And, Jesus is a creation. Christ was created as a spirit child. He is god in flesh, but only "a" god in flesh, one of three gods that comprise the office of the Trinity (Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost). Mormon theology teaches that god used to be a man on another planet, that he became a god by following the laws and ordinances of the god on that world, and that he brought one of his wives to this world with whom he produces spirit children who then inhabit human bodies at birth. The first spirit child to be born was Jesus. Second was Satan, and then we all followed. The Jesus of Mormonism is

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<sup>21</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org/lds.htm>

<sup>22</sup>Boa, 95.

<sup>23</sup>Walter Martin, *Rise of the Cults*, Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1955, 1977, 65, quoting Brigham Young from *Journal of Discourses*, 1:50.

definitely not the same Jesus of the Bible. Therefore, faith in the Mormon Jesus, is faith misplaced because the Mormon Jesus doesn't exist.

Salvation is not obtained by Jesus death on the Cross. Instead, forgiveness of sin comes via a cooperative effort with God. Man must be “good” and “follow” the laws and ordinances of the Mormon church to obtain forgiveness. In the Mormon world, salvation also includes universal resurrection as part of the Eternal Progression. Everyone has eternal life. The term salvation is rarely used. Rather the Mormons speak of “exaltation” in which the person is destined to attain the highest degree of heaven after death. As noted, this is a salvation by works. If asked to defend this doctrine, the Mormon would most likely quote from James where he writes “*faith without works is dead*” (James 2:26).

Mormons have “undermined the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible. The 8th article of faith from the Mormon Church states, ‘We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.’ The interesting thing is that Joseph Smith allegedly corrected the Bible in what is called The Inspired Version, though it is not used by the LDS church. Though they claim they trust the Bible, in reality they do not. They use Mormon presuppositions to interpret it. For example, where the Bible says there are no other gods in the universe (Isaiah 43:10; 44:6,8), they interpret it to mean ‘no other gods of this world.’”<sup>24</sup>

An interesting side issue of the Mormon religion is its attitude on Blacks. One of the “benefits” of belonging to the Mormon Church is the ability to be ordained as a priest. Blacks historically could not be married in the Temple (thus, preventing them from obtaining the highest level of eternity) and Black men could not become priests. This is because the black skin was a curse from God (the “mark of Ham”). In an “amazing” revelation, this position was changed in 1978 when the LDS issued a proclamation opening the priesthood to Black men.

And, of course, the early issue was that of polygamy. This point really tended to stress the low position of women in the church. The Temple wedding is viewed as a “sealing.” This is not for the benefit of the man, but for the woman, for where the wedding is not “sealed,” the couple will be viewed as divorced in heaven. “Polygamy would presumably not require any other inducement to make it agreeable to certain men; but the women would not naturally find it so attractive. Hence the doctrine that a woman cannot be saved without being “sealed” to a man.”<sup>25</sup>

The LDS approaches religion by stressing its many areas of agreement with

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<sup>24</sup>From “*Is Mormonism Christian?*” at <http://www.carm.org>

<sup>25</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, 46.

Christianity. Younger, less mature, Mormons are not taught the “finer” points of doctrine. The foundation must first be laid so that the deeper points of theology may be properly understood. This is brought about, at least in part, because the prophets (president) of the church continue “refine” doctrine. Further, historically, the church leadership has practiced beliefs which have not been communicated or which are denied to the general membership. Historically, the practice of polygamy is a prime example.

In line with many of the cults, the Mormons also have their share of secret rites, rites not even given to all church members. This leads to doctrinal ignorance on the part of many church members who have not been made privy to the sacred nature of Temple rituals and ceremonies. These include oaths, key words, covenants, and the secrets of the priesthood. Only those who have been “temple recommend” learn the true inner workings of the LDS. It is not surprising to learn that the authority of the Mormon church flows from the top downward. The prophet/president holds all the power. Women are excluded from the positions of power. Consider Irvine’s comments:

Its most outstanding manifestation consists in the fact that every Mormon wears on his body an endowment garment, containing figures and symbols of things very vital to him. These garments are bestowed upon the Mormon convert after due discipline in the secret temple ceremonies of the Mormon Church.<sup>26</sup>

One of the major problems with determining the doctrine of the Mormon church is the changing nature of the “official” teachings. The canonized scriptures of the Mormon church include the *Book of Mormon*<sup>27</sup>, *Doctrine and Covenants*, *Pearl of Great Price*, and the King James Version of the Bible (the “standard works”). However, a variety of official sermons and talks by the President and other top leaders as found in the church teaching manuals, books, magazines, and newspapers may contain what ultimately becomes the rules of practice. The church maintains that the “standard works” are the only source of doctrine, but this is frequently not the case. For example, baptism of the dead is a vicarious exercise strongly carried on by the church, but there is nothing in the *Book of Mormon* on this practice. In fact, the

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<sup>26</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 133.

<sup>27</sup>As an aside, one of the interesting issues is the speculation over the origin of the *Book of Mormon*. Did Joseph Smith, Jr. write it? Consider Braden’s comments: “The most commonly accepted explanation of the book’s origin by non-Mormons is that it was based upon a historic novel written by a Presbyterian clergyman named Spaulding which he intended calling *The Manuscript Found in the Wilds of Mormon; or Unearthed Records of the Nephites*.” Charles S. Braden, *Those Who Believe*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949, 425.



*Book of Mormon* clearly teaches that salvation only can be attained in this life.

This is all complicated further by the fact that the President of the church must be obeyed, even if he is wrong!

And, the *Book of Mormon* has, itself, undergone revisions. For example, consider the following verse from 1 Nephi:

And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of God, after the manner of the flesh.

Now, consider the same verse in the present edition:

And he said unto me: Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of **the Son** of God, after the manner of the flesh.

## Morals, the Writings, and Other Considerations

*Doctrines and Covenants* is a group of 138 revelations from God. 135 of these were recorded by Joseph Smith, one was added by Brigham Young, and two were added more recently, one in 1890 concerning polygamy and the other in 1978 concerning the role of Black persons in the church.

*The Peal of Great Price* is a compilation of revisions and corrections to the King James Version of the Bible. The work also contains additional revelations from God and concludes with the 13 Articles of Faith.

To understand the significance of the Mormon writings, consider the following explanation of the *Book of Mormon* as quoted from other Mormon writings:

The state purpose of the *Book of Mormon* (in its introduction) is universal: to witness to the world the truth and divinity of Jesus Christ, and his mission of salvation through the gospel he taught. . . The sealed book, the *Book of Mormon*, is predicted by Bible prophecy and by its own declaration to be a confirming, additional revelation from God of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, and of the covenants made with their fathers. . . It claims to be part of the new covenant to Israel.<sup>28</sup>

Other important works include:

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<sup>28</sup>Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 179, quoting *The Book of Mormon* by R. K. Salyards, Sr., Herald House, Independence, MO: n.d., pp.13-16.

*History of the Church*, mostly written at the time of Joseph Smith (7 volumes)  
*Journal of Discourses*, written by close associates of Smith (26 volumes)  
*Lectures on Faith*, prepared by Smith and delivered at the School of the Prophets. These seven lectures discuss theology, the nature of God, and the principles of faith.  
*The Inspired Translation of the Bible*, a revision of the KJV prepared by Smith

As an example of the types of teachings contained in these documents, the *Journal of Discourses* teach that God the father actually engaged in sexual activity with Mary in order to impregnate her. Jesus was a polygamist, marrying Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene at the wedding in Cana. He father many children. It should come as no surprise that the modern Mormon church does not stress these two teachings!

But, skipping the issue of multiple wives, the Mormon church is a very moral church. They stress the preservation of the body, keeping the best health they can, and they avoid tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and the like. They often will avoid tea, coffee, and soft drinks which have caffeine. They tithe faithfully, to the point where the accumulated assets of the church are in excess of \$2 billion.<sup>29</sup> The church also has fast offerings where the members contribute the value of two meals on the first Sunday of each month to support and feed the poor. While there is some contention of statistics, Walter Martin cites social statistics of the state of Utah to show that the rates of divorce, child abuse, and teenage pregnancy and suicide are above the national average and climbing.<sup>30</sup> ReligiousTolerance.org disputes these statistics.

Cults, at least, successful ones, produce off-spring. Consider the list of off-spring from the Mormons:

- ▶ Aaronic Order: unknown membership; 6 centers; 20 ministers
- ▶ Apostolic United Brethren: about 7,000 members. They disagree with the LDS' decision to allow ordination of Afro-Americans and allowing women to assume leadership positions.
- ▶ Church of Christ (Fetting/Bronson): about 2000 members
- ▶ Church of Christ (Temple Lot): about 2400 members
- ▶ The Church of Christ "With The Elijah Message," established in 1929, 12,500 members worldwide

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<sup>29</sup>As of 1982, per Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 167.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, 168.

- ▶ Church of Jesus Christ (Bickertonite): about 2700 members
- ▶ Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints This denomination was formed in 1860 by remnants of the original church who did not make the trek to Utah. They reject certain beliefs and practices of the LDS church, including marriage sealing for eternity; they allow both men and women into the priesthood; their services are open to the public. They have about 250,000 members.
- ▶ United Order Effort: a polygamy practicing group of perhaps 10,000 members
- ▶ Restoration Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It split from the Reorganized Church in 1991 because of the latter's liberal theology. It is centered in Independence, Missouri, and had an estimated membership of 2,500 in mid-1996. They publish a periodical "The Restoration Advocate" 6 times a year.

## Witnessing to a Mormon

In witnessing to any cult, one must be very careful to understand all of the issues involved. The more deeply a person has become immersed in another religion, the more difficult the task of witnessing. The reason for this is the vast amount of indoctrination the cultist has received. This indoctrination will influence their world views and their views of what are valid arguments and valid pieces of literature. For example, since the Mormons only use the King James Version of the Bible, the use of any other version will undermine the position of the Christian witness.

Further, in most instances one should avoid a debate with the cult member over Scripture or doctrinal positions. While this may ultimately prove to be difficult, most of these verse-by-verse debates become nothing more than ping pong games without a winner. Both sides go home having scored few points. The debate accomplishes little. Consider the advice from one book written for the express purpose of teaching people how to witness to the Mormons.

Can mature Christians who know little or nothing about Mormonism witness *effectively* to Mormons? We don't believe it is possible. They will misunderstand what the Mormons are saying or will not be able to pick out their mistakes or their attempts to present only the more palatable aspects of Mormon doctrine or even to misrepresent it. Many times we have heard Christians, who have spoken to Mormon

missionaries, tell us, “They believe the same as we do.”<sup>31</sup>

This misunderstanding stems from the language issues which have already been discussed and are further highlighted in the pages following this chapter. As in the case of any evangelistic outreach, prayer and preparation are key elements in the approach to a Mormon. A good, complete understanding of the Mormon positions and doctrine are vital. This should all be undertaken in Christian love, for it is the love of Christ shining through the believer which will ultimately reflect the difference between the position of any cult and the true believer of Christ.

In the case of Mormons in particular, it is vital to understand their literature. This becomes a must, and may, ultimately, lead to that verse-by-verse debate discussed earlier. It is best to keep any discussions limited in length – that is, keep them short. Do not overburden the Mormon (or any other cult member) with too many facts and arguments. Be selective and allow the Holy Spirit to perform His Work. The goal here is not to destroy one or more branches of the tree – things represented by particular doctrines – but rather the goal is to topple the tree. To accomplish this, one must cut the trunk as close to the ground as possible. As any one who has brought down a tree of any size using hand saws will know, this is a slow, laborious process.

The verse-by-verse, doctrine-by-doctrine attack will usually fail with the Mormons because the Mormon does not necessarily believe everything Scripture states. The Mormon’s doctrine arises from other sources. Merely showing him a verse from the Bible which contradicts his belief will not cause a change of heart. The Mormon does not have that much faith in the entire written Word. Remember, the Bible is valid only in so far as it is interpreted correctly.

The ultimate goal is to lead the Mormon into a personal relationship with the one *true* God of the Bible. Keep in mind, he thinks he already worships the one true God. It is up to you to show him that he has a different God, a different Jesus, another gospel, and that he is breaking the first commandment. The strategy is to first undermine the Mormon’s testimony and confidence in the Mormon Church organization—its teachings, official history, unique scriptures (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price), and biblical misinterpretations.<sup>32</sup>

Approach the Mormon with questions you already know the answers to and which

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<sup>31</sup>**Farkas, John R. and David A. Reed**, *Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions and Errors*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1995.

<sup>32</sup>Reed, David A.; and Farkas, John R., *How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1994.

cannot be evade by him. Understand that “feelings” are important in the Mormon structure and may be substitutes for facts. Therefore, these may be used to move the Mormon to the true facts. The questions asked should be designed to lead the Mormon to your beliefs, not his. Try and take control of the meeting. Go on the offensive, but in a non-offensive, loving way. Other suggestions would be to:

- ✓ Do be prepared to document information that the Mormon has never heard or understood before.
- ✓ Do require the Mormon to provide documentation and references for points he or she wishes to make.
- ✓ Do stop to look up references you are given to be sure they are being used properly and in context.
- ✓ Do maintain a low-keyed, soft, friendly approach in order to keep the door open for further discussions. Reserve a bolder and more aggressive approach for one-time meetings with strangers who are unlikely to return.
- ✓ Do focus on important matters. Avoid wasting time on trivia.
- ✓ Do arrange for a captive audience by inviting Mormons to your home for a meal and asking them to arrive an hour or two before dinnertime so you can talk together. This will make it more difficult for them to escape when their position becomes indefensible by “remembering” an urgent appointment or inventing another excuse to leave. They are already committed to remain for the meal.
- ✓ Don’t assume that the individuals you deal with know Mormon doctrine. Many members have little knowledge and understanding of their Church’s unique teachings. Others comprehend everything. Some are aware of the strange doctrines but conceal this knowledge in an attempt to appear Christian.<sup>33</sup>

And, as we stated above, do all of this in a loving manner – as Peter writes, with gentleness, meekness, and the fear of God. Be friendly, do not argue, do not become hostile, do not get angry. Take you path from the example set by Jesus and be a friend ov everyone.

### **1 Peter 3:15**

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;*

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

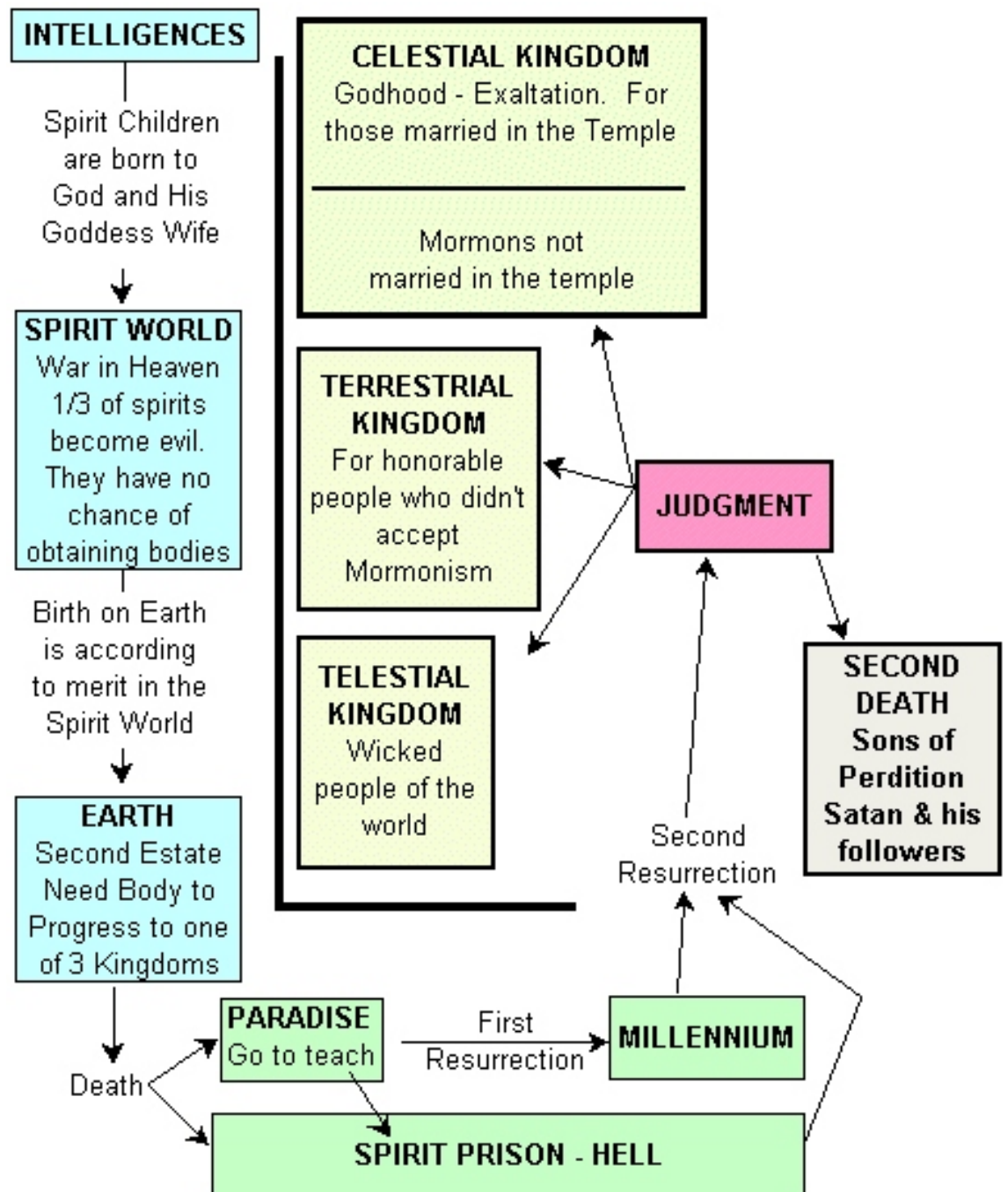
## **The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.**

- ◆ We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.
- ◆ We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.
- ◆ We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.
- ◆ We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.
- ◆ We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.
- ◆ We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth.
- ◆ We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth.
- ◆ We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.
- ◆ We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.
- ◆ We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.
- ◆ We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.
- ◆ We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.
- ◆ We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul--We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things. <sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>[http://www.religioustolerance.org/lds\\_st.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/lds_st.htm)

## Eternal Progression<sup>35</sup>



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<sup>35</sup><http://www.carm.org>

## Mormon Terms and Definitions

**Aaronic Priesthood** This is called the lesser priesthood and is usually held by young men starting at the age of 12 to the age of about 18. It is also held for a short time by men who have just become members.

**Adam-God** From April 1852 to at least February 1877 LDS Church President Brigham Young clearly taught that Adam of the Garden of Eden is the father of our spirits, that Adam is the father of the spirit of Jesus Christ and the literal father of his body, and that Adam is our God. This is not now taught by the Mormon Church, and many Mormons are not aware it once was; others claim Brigham Young is incorrectly quoted.

**Afterlife** The Mormon afterlife is divided into four levels. The lowest is hell, and then there are three levels of heaven: the telestial, the terrestrial, and the place where God dwells, the celestial (also called the kingdom of God). The celestial is also divided, the highest level being exaltation, or becoming a God.

**Apostles** The Mormon Church claims to have the same organization as the primitive church that Jesus set up. They also have twelve Apostles and sometimes use this as a proof of their divine appointment as the one true Church. But they actually have fifteen or more most of the time. The general practice has been for a new President, who is also an Apostle, to appoint counselors from the Quorum of the Twelve; then the openings left by the President and his counselors are filled, resulting in a total of fifteen.

**Bible** The King James Version of the Bible is one of the canonized scriptures of the Mormon Church, but it is considered incomplete, incorrectly translated with parts missing. Joseph Smith rewrote it, but only the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints regularly uses his version. They call it Joseph Smith's "New Translation" of the Bible. The Mormon Church in Salt Lake City calls it the Joseph Smith Translation. They feature some of it in the footnotes and appendix of their edition of the King James Bible.

**Celestial Kingdom** See *Afterlife*.

**Chapel** A local building where Mormons hold their worship services and other activities.

**Eternal Progression** The teaching that each of us has the potential to become a God just like God the Father did. He was once a man capable of physical death, was resurrected, and progressed to become a God. We can take a similar path and get all the power, glory, dominion, and knowledge that the Father and Jesus Christ have. We then will be able to procreate spirit children who will worship us as we do God the Father.

**Exaltation** Becoming a God in the highest level of the celestial kingdom. See *Eternal Progression*.

**Excommunication** The highest disciplinary action that the Church can take against a member. Excommunicated persons lose their membership in the Church.

**First Presidency** A collective name for the President of the Mormon Church and his counselors, usually two.

**General Conference** An official meeting held twice per year, early in April



and October, for general membership instruction, teaching, and announcements by the top leaders of the Mormon Church.

**God** Within Mormonism, Gods, angels, people, and devils all have the same nature or substance but are at different stages along the line of progression to Godhood. God the Father was once a man like us, capable of physical death, and he progressed until he became a God. He has a body of flesh and bones, but no blood.

**Heaven** See *Afterlife*.

**Hell** A place of torment from which most nonbelievers are resurrected into the telestial kingdom; only a limited number remain in hell forever—the devil and the demons and apostates who consciously reject and work against Mormonism.

**Jehovah** The name for the preincarnate Jesus Christ.

**Jesus Christ** The spirit of Jesus Christ was the first spirit born to God the Father and his wife (Heavenly Mother), and he progressed to become a God under the Father. (The Father is also the literal father of Jesus' body in exactly the same way we were begotten by our earthly parents.) Jesus now has a body of flesh and bones, but no blood. He is the spirit brother of Satan, whose spirit was procreated in the same way as Jesus'.

**Marriage** The Mormon Church teaches two types of marriage. One ends at death. The other is for "time and eternity." If a couple is married in a Mormon temple by someone with authority, it is believed they will stay married in the next life. This kind of marriage is needed if they are to progress, not only as husband and wife, but as God and Goddess.

**Melchizedek Priesthood** The higher of two categories of ministry in the LDS Church, assigned primarily to seasoned members over the age of 18 and to males only.

**Mother in Heaven** The wife of God the Father, the mother of his spirit children.

**Polygamy** The practice of men having more than one wife was started by Joseph Smith in the early/mid 1830s and ostensibly ended in 1890. It is not now practiced within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormon Church headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah. Members found practicing it are excommunicated. While the practice was ended, the revelation teaching it is still in Mormon scripture (D&C 132). Some Mormon splinter groups believe the teaching was for eternity and still practice it. These modern-day polygamists (called fundamentalists) number in the 30,000–50,000 range.

**Pre-existence** The Mormon teaching that our spirits (Mormons and non-Mormons) were procreated in a premortal life by God the Father and our Mother in Heaven, that our spirits were born and raised to maturity before coming to earth to obtain physical bodies, and that the spirit of Jesus Christ was the first one born to our heavenly parents.

**Priesthood** A category of ministry in the LDS Church open to all worthy males 12 years of age or older, empowering them to act in God's name. See *Aaronic Priesthood* and *Melchizedek Priesthood*.

**Prophet** The top leader of the Mormon Church is considered not only a Prophet but also a Seer and Revelator. He has the title "President." He is the only one

who can speak for the whole church and receive new revelation for the whole church. When the existing Prophet dies, the most senior (in time as an Apostle, not in age) of the twelve Apostles, the President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, becomes the new President. He can appoint counselors, who receive their authority from him.

**Salvation** A word that Mormons qualify in one of three ways: *unconditional* or *general* salvation is simply resurrection from the dead, granted to all through Christ's atonement; *conditional* or *individual* salvation involves entering the celestial kingdom through works of Mormonism; *full* salvation means exaltation to become a God as a result of temple ceremonies and other works.

**Satan** One of the spirit children of God. As a consequence of their rebellion, Satan and his angels cannot have mortal bodies; hence they cannot progress.

**Scriptures** The Mormon Church has four documents it calls canonized scriptures: the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and the King James Version of the Holy Bible. See Appendix 1 for details.

**Son of God** Besides Jesus Christ, all of us are viewed as the children of God, his literal spirit children. This makes us all—Mormons, non-Mormons, Jesus Christ, and Satan—spirit brothers and sisters. See *Pre-existence* and *Spirits*.

**Spirits** Non-material beings allegedly procreated in the pre-existence by God the Father and his wife. Jesus Christ (and even we ourselves) was supposedly born and raised to maturity as a spirit before coming into a body on this earth. The spirit of Satan was also procreated in this way. This makes Satan and Jesus Christ spirit brothers. Jesus selected a righteous path; Satan selected the opposite.

**Stake** A group of wards, similar to a Roman Catholic diocese.

**Standard Works** The four canonized scriptures (see *Scriptures* above) used by the Mormon Church are called the *standard works*.

**Temple** One of about four dozen large religious buildings around the world in which special ceremonies are performed for the living and the dead; off limits to nonmembers and even to Mormons who lack a "temple recommend" from their leaders.

**Trinity** This word is used by Christians to summarize the biblical teaching that within the one true God are three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. They share the same nature or substance, so that there are not three Gods, but three persons in the one God.

Mormons say they also believe in the trinitarian concept of God. But what they really mean is that God the Father is a God, God the Son is another God, and God the Holy Ghost is a third God, and that they are "one God" because they are "*one in purpose*." Mormons often have an incorrect understanding of what Christians mean by the Trinity. They say Christians believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one person (i.e., Monophysitism) or that God shows himself as the Father or the Son or the Holy Ghost (i.e., Modalism).

**Virgin Birth** A concept negated by the view that God, a resurrected man with flesh and bones according to Mormon teachings, literally fathered Jesus in the flesh in the same way in which earthly men father their children.

**Ward** A local Mormon congregation. The building it meets in is called a chapel.

**Word of Wisdom** The Mormon teaching requiring abstinence from tobacco, alcohol, and hot drinks (tea and coffee).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Farkas, John R. and David A. Reed, *Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions and Errors*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1995.

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Reed, David A., *How to rescue your loved one from Mormonism* [computer file] / David A. Reed and John R. Farkas.—electronic ed.—Grand Rapids : Baker Book House, 1997, c1994, 203 p.—(Logos Library System)

Reed, David A., *Mormons* [computer file] : *Answered verse by verse*, David A. Reed and John R. Farkas.—electronic ed.—Grand Rapids : Baker Book House, 1997, c1992, 154 p.—(Logos Library System)

## Terminology of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses<sup>37</sup>

Words are the tools of evangelism. With Cults, definitions are the tools you need to sharpen. It is vitally important, especially with Mormons, to know the meanings of the words they use. A Mormon can say he believes in the Trinity and salvation by grace but what he means is that he believes in the godhead, which is an office held by three separate gods, and that resurrection is a free gift to everyone. With J.W.'s, for example, the Holy Spirit is not a person but a force like radar. So, if you don't know their definitions you'll only be talking in circles.

Know their definitions and you will be a much more effective witness for Christ.

**LDS** = Latter-day Saints or Mormons. **JW** = Jehovah's Witnesses.

### **BIBLE**

**LDS** - The Bible is correct only as far as it is correctly translated. It is basically trustworthy. It is the only one of the four standard works (Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price) that is not considered infallible.

**JW** - The Bible is the inerrant word of God. (Be careful. Though the J.W. organization believes in the inspired Word of God it has changed the Bible to support its own theological bias.)

**Bible** - the Bible is the inspired inerrant word of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

### **SALVATION**

**LDS** - Simple bodily resurrection. It does not simply mean forgiveness of sins. Jesus died for universal resurrection.

**JW** - Earned by good works in cooperation with Jesus' sacrifice.

**Bible** - Forgiveness of sins with the result of a present new life and in the future eternal life with God (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 10:9-10).

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<sup>37</sup>All materials in this comparison come from the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, <http://www.carm.org>.

## HEAVEN

**LDS** - Divided into three Kingdoms: Celestial, Terrestrial, and Telestial. The Celestial is for perfect Mormons, the Terrestrial is for moral people and lukewarm LDS, and the Telestial Kingdom is for everyone else.

**JW** - The place that God dwells. Christians do not go to heaven except for 144,000 elite JW's.

**Bible** - The dwelling place of God (1 Kings 8:30). Christians go to heaven.

## KINGDOM OF GOD

**LDS** - Celestial heaven.

**JW** - God's "theocratic" rule on earth, his "system of things."

**Bible** - All the believers of Christ (Matt. 13:41-43).

## HOLY GHOST

**LDS** - "A spirit man. He can only be at one place at one time... " (Mormon Doctrine by Bruce McConkie, p. 359.) The Holy Ghost is contrasted with the Spirit of God which is the influence of the Godhead that fills the immensity of space which enables God to know what is going on. It is likened to electricity."

**JW** - God's active force. He is not alive, but a force like radar.

**Bible** - Third person of the Trinity. Same as Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4).

## ETERNAL LIFE

**LDS** - Exaltation (exaltation to a Mormon means obtaining Godhood) in the Celestial Kingdom.

**JW** - Eternal life on paradise earth - for JW's only.

**Bible** - Forgiveness of sins and life eternal with God (John 17:3; Rom. 6:23).

## GODHEAD

**LDS** - An office held by three separate Gods: the Father who is a god; Jesus who is a god; and the Holy Ghost who is a god.

**JW** - Consists of only one person: the Father.

**Bible** - God Himself, not an office. Three persons in one God. A Trinity: The Father; the Son; and the Holy Spirit.

## JESUS

**LDS** - Spirit brother of Satan. A god in the Godhead. He is Jehovah of the O.T. compared to Elohim being the Father. He was the first spirit child to be born to the Father and Mother gods.

**JW** - Jesus is not God, but Michael the Archangel who became a man and then stopped being a man and became an angel again.

**Bible** - Jesus is God, second person of the Trinity (John 1:1,14; Col. 2:9).

## ATONEMENT

**LDS** - The sacrifice of Christ that made resurrection possible along with the possibility of our earning forgiveness of sins.

**JW** - The atonement makes possible our earning salvation.

**Bible** - The substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. He died for our sins (1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 2:2).

## PRE-EXISTENCE

**LDS** - We existed in heaven with God our (literal) Father before we became human.

**JW** - No pre-existence.

**Bible** - We did not exist before we came to earth (1 Cor. 15:46).

## GOSPEL

**LDS** - The laws and the ordinances of the Mormon church.

**JW** - The teachings of Jesus, the kingdom and kingdom work (it is general and vague).

**Bible** - The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

As you can see, some definitions are quite different. Some are very similar. The better you know them the better able you will

*... sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;*

**1 Peter 3:15**

# Jehovah's Witnesses

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society  
WTS

Religion is doing anything contrary to the will of Almighty God.  
Religion is of the Devil.

J.B. Rutherford<sup>38</sup>  
Second President of the Witnesses

Who owns the largest printing press in the world? The New York *Times*? *Look*? No! It is the Jehovah's Witnesses. They have one press that puts out 500 pieces of propaganda every second. From that one press alone, comes out 84,000,000 books and pamphlets.<sup>39</sup>

## History

Compared to the Mormons, the Witnesses are a fairly recent addition to the world of cults. As with most cults, the Witnesses are the figment of one man's imagination, in this case one Charles Taze Russell. Russell had great difficulty in dealing with the doctrine of eternal hell fire and in his studies came to deny not only eternal punishment, but also the Trinity, and the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit. So, in 1872 he created his own religion, what is now known as the Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell saw himself as the last special messenger of the Age of the Church.

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<sup>38</sup>*Theocracy*, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, 1944, 18, as quoted by Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949, 358.

<sup>39</sup>Tan, Paul Lee, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996.



The Witnesses take after Russell in more than one respect. Russell was a man who desired to get his doctrine before the public. In 1879 he sought to popularize his aberrant ideas on doctrine. He met N. H. Barbour, a Second Adventist, one of the Spiritual descendants of the Millerites (see next chapter), who had expected Christ's return in 1844. This group had expected the second coming to occur in 1874, but were likewise disappointed. Barbour, however, refused to accept such a disappointment. He proclaimed an invisible to human eyes return of Christ had occurred in 1874. Russell became co-publisher of Barbour's magazine, *The Herald of the Morning*. At this point there are conflicts in the story. One account states that by 1884 Russell controlled the publication, renaming it *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*, and founded Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society (now known as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society).

Another account states that Russell had a dispute with Barbour and left the Second Adventist group, taking many of the followers with him. He started his own publication, *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. Either way, the first edition of The Watchtower magazine was only 6,000 copies each month. Today the Witnesses' publishing complex in Brooklyn, New York, churns out 100,000 books and 800,000 copies of its two magazines--daily!

The publications are important because Russell believed his were the only correct interpretations of Scripture. The proper method of spreading this interpretation was in print. The Watchtower Society continues in this tradition today.

Following Russell's death in 1916, a Missouri lawyer named Joseph Franklin Rutherford became president of the Watch Tower Society. Rutherford did not follow all of Russell's teaching and there was a split within the group.<sup>40</sup> In 1931 Rutherford changed the name of the organization to "The Jehovah's Witnesses," based upon part of a passage in Isaiah (43:10: "*You are My witnesses, says the LORD*"). After Rutherford's death, Nathan Knorr was named president and he was followed by Frederick William Franz and then by Milton G. Henschel, who is the president today. The group is about the same size as the Mormons, having about 11.5 million members world wide.<sup>41</sup> The Watchtower Society statistics indicate that 740 house calls are required to recruit each of the nearly 200,000 new members who join every year. As may be seen, this makes their rate of growth smaller than the Mormons.

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<sup>40</sup>The splinter group was known as the Dawn Bible Students, after one of Russell's works, *Millennial Dawn*. The Dawnites agree with 95% of the Witnesses' teaching, disagreeing with only the innovations imposed by Rutherford and the issue of a "second chance" for people who reject Christ. On the other hand, The Watchtower Society has called the Dawnites evil. See Walter Martin, *Rise of the Cults*, Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1955, 1977, 22.

<sup>41</sup>David A. Reed, *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses: Subject by Subject*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998, c1996, electronic edition.

By another count, They currently have about 6 million “publishers” and “pioneers” in over 75,000 congregations in more than 200 countries. In excess of 14 million people (pioneers, publishers, adherents and potential members) attended their Memorial service at the time of Passover in 1999. There are almost 1 million witnesses in the U.S., about 111,000 in Canada. Mexico and Italy have the largest numbers of witnesses.<sup>42</sup>

As mentioned above , the Witnesses follow in Russell’s teachings by denying the deity of Christ, the physical resurrection, and salvation by grace. To support its erring doctrines, the Watchtower organization (which is the author and teacher of all official Witnesses’ theology) has even altered the Bible to make it say what the group wants. They have produced the own version of the KJV called The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. This translation was first released in 1950 and revised in 1951 and 1961, with hundreds of verses changed to fit Watchtower doctrines. This translation continues to be rewritten every few years, with additional changes made to bring God’s Word into closer agreement with what the organization’s aberrant ideas. For example, they have inserted of the name *Jehovah* 237 times in the New Testament.

Another example of rewriting Scripture to match doctrine will be found in a comparison of versions. In the King James Version of the Bible, John 1:1 reads:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word **was God.***

The New World Translation is

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word **was a god.***

Further, the Witnesses’ own literature is viewed as the *infallible interpreter* of the Bible. Deviations are not tolerated from the Witnesses’ teachings.

Rutherford’s teachings were not all in line with Russell’s, but this fact is frequently ignored by the modern JW church. And, Rutherford, despite the effort to break with Russell, did follow some of the founder’s key teachings. For example, Rutherford taught Christ’s rule commenced in 1914, based upon a Russell prophecy, even though there was no actual second coming. During the period from 1914 until 1918, Christ was at work in the Temple of Jehovah cleaning the Temple so He could dwell there permanently and He was also at work judging men. Here Christ will receive the elite 144,000 Witnesses into Heaven, while the remainder of the resurrected righteous will dwell on earth. Notice, the result of this teaching is a following of Russell doctrine,

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<sup>42</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org> citing the Watchtower Society’s own statistics.

even though the official church position of the time was to reject Russell's teachings. Also, as noted, the result of this teaching is that there will not be an actual physical return of Christ to earth.

## How the Witnesses interpret the Scriptures

As is typical of the cults that use the Bible as support for their position, the Witnesses' position produces a host of interpretive errors. These problems are exacerbated by the use of the Witnesses' own translation of Scripture. In general, the interpretative issues may be summarized as follows:

- Taking verses out of their immediate context.

- Refusing to read verses in the entire biblical context.

- Inserting their theological presuppositions into the text.

- Altering the Biblical text to suit their needs.

- Latching onto one verse to interpret a host of others.

- Changing the meanings of words.

- Proclaiming some passages to be figurative when they contradict their doctrines.

- Adding to the Word of God.

Additionally, the Witnesses require of its members regular and frequent weekly attendance at their "Bible Study" meetings where they are repeatedly indoctrinated with anti-Christian doctrines. The Watchtower magazine is read at these meetings so the church basically does the thinking for its members. Members are told they will be persecuted when they go door to door teaching their false doctrines. This creates a unity within the group because this persecution justifies their membership in the Witnesses. As with most cults, the members are told the Watchtower Society is the only true church organization on the earth. Witnesses are urged to stay within the group, having friends and acquaintances that are only Witness's. Notice that this also keeps outside examination of the individual members to a minimum. Further, they shun those who leave their group (or at least they are told to do so). This helps to assure that no one knows why someone has left. Those left behind in the organization have not way to discover the errors of their way from those who have found the truth!

## Witnesses' Beliefs

1. There is one God in one person, *Make Sure of All Things*, p 188.
2. There is no Trinity, *Let God be True*, p. 100-101; *Make Sure of All Things*, p.386.
3. The Holy Spirit is a force, not alive, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 406-407.
4. The Holy Spirit is God's impersonal active force, *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1952, p. 24.
5. Jehovah's first creation was his 'only-begotten Son'. . . was used by Jehovah in creating all other things", *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pp. 390-391.
6. Jesus was Michael the archangel who became a man, *The Watchtower*, May 15, 1963, p. 307; *The New World*, 284.
7. Jesus was only a perfect man, not God in flesh, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 306.
8. Jesus did not rise from the dead in his physical body, *Awake!* July 22, 1973, p. 4.
9. Jesus was raised "not a human creature, but a spirit." *Let God be True*, p. 276.
10. Jesus did not die on a cross but on a stake, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 89-90.
11. Jesus returned to earth, invisibly, in 1914, *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 300.
12. Jesus' ransom sacrifice did not include Adam, *Let God be True*, p. 119.
13. Their church is the self-proclaimed prophet of God, *The Watchtower*, April 1, 1972, p. 197.
14. They claim to be the only channel of God's truth, *The Watchtower*, Feb. 15, 1981, p. 19.
15. Only their church members will be saved, *The Watchtower*, Feb, 15, 1979, p. 30.
16. Good works are necessary for salvation, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pp. 150, 152.
17. The soul ceases to exist after death, *Let God be True*, p. 59, 60, 67.

18. There is no hell of fire where the wicked are punished, *Let God be True*, p. 79, 80.
19. Only 144,000 Jehovah's Witness go to heaven, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 166-167, 361; *Let God be True*, p. 121.
20. Blood transfusions are a sin, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 72-73.
21. The Cross is a pagan symbol and should not be used, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 90-92.
22. Salvation is by faith and what you do, *Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pp. 150,152.
23. It is possible to lose your salvation, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 1985, pp. 358-359.
24. The universe is billions of years old, *Your will Be Done on Earth*, p. 43.
25. Each of the 6 creative days of God in Genesis 1, was 7000 years long. Therefore, Man was created toward the end of 42,000 years of earth's preparation, *Let God be True*, p. 168.
26. They also refuse to vote, salute the flag, sing the "Star Spangled Banner," or celebrate Christmas or birthdays. They are not allowed to serve in the armed forces.

## Witnessing to a Witness

The Christian witnesses to save others. The Jehovah's Witness witnesses to become a part of the elite 144,000, that is, to save himself.

As with many other religions, debating with a Witness will not convert him. Even if you win the argument or debate, the Witness will still walk away a Witness. It is like trimming a tree. Some branches may get cut off, but the tree will still stand. The approach which is successful is the one which will cut through the base of the tree, allowing the tree to fall, usually of its own weight.

The indoctrination of the Watchtower Society is what drives the members. You may win the argument because you have struck upon a verse or position that is not supported well by the indoctrination. However, since this is so, you also have not overcome any of the brainwashing which the Witness has accepted or endured. So,

prepare by learning about the Witnesses. Review books on the cult, such as those listed in the appendix to this chapter. Learn to understand why the organizational doctrine, the indoctrinations, need to be overcome. Your task is to not win the religious arguments but to break through the brainwashing. You must overcome the concept that the Watchtower Society is “God’s organization.”

It is important to understand that the membership has been instructed *not* to listen to Christians who want to tell them about Jesus, *not* to debate doctrine with knowledgeable members of other churches, and *not* to read literature critical of the organization or its beliefs. As indicated, the Witnesses have been indoctrinated to answer people’s *questions* and to *help* people who need information. Approaching a Witness with the reasons why his beliefs are wrong and yours are right will encounter fierce resistance. Try designing your approach as a request for help. Put your arguments in the forms of questions outwardly designed to allow the Witness to “help” you. The seeds of the Gospel may be planted in the questions. Work with the knowledge and understanding of the indoctrination rather than struggling against it.

Since the essential doctrines involve Jesus, and, thus, the Trinity, our natural inclination is to start with this area first. However, you must remember the Witnesses are well versed and indoctrinated in this area. A better approach is to move this issue off to the side and deal with the Witnesses’ views of the Watchtower organization. Work at showing the leadership of the organization is more fallible than they present. Attack, if you will, the organization structure of the cult rather than their theological beliefs. As you crack the structure, the views of the indoctrinations will weaken and you will be able to make headway on the theological beliefs.

One cannot over emphasize the degree of “brainwashing” the various cults use. They record a message in the minds of the members. This message is just played over and over again and forms the basis of belief. By starting with the organization, the basis on which the message has been improperly recorded. If the Witness can be convinced of this, then the contents of the message itself may be dealt with. This may be a long, difficult evangelistic effort. And, remember, that no two cultists are exactly the same. The pattern which works with one, will not necessarily work with the next cult member you witness to. Each person is different, and these differences must be accounted.

## **Organizational Names of the Jehovah's Witnesses**

**Adventist(s)** This name was first applied to followers of Baptist lay preacher William Miller, who had predicted Christ would return in October 1843 or 1844. After the great “Disappointment of 1844,” Miller’s followers formed several Adventist sects. Watchtower founder Charles T. Russell took instruction from and fellowshiped with Adventists from 1868 through 1879, and quit the staff of the Adventist publication *The Herald of the Morning* in 1879 to begin publishing his own magazine. So, Russell was actually an Adventist at the time of his early writings. Besides Jehovah’s Witnesses, other sects that sprang from the Adventist movement include the Seventh Day Adventists, the Advent Christian Church, the Church of God (Faith of Abraham), and the Life and Advent Union.

**Bible Students** The followers of Charles T. Russell called themselves Bible Students. After his death this name continued to be used, not only by those who stuck with the Watchtower organization controlled by J.B. Rutherford but also by splinter groups under the leadership of former Russell appointees. The name still applies to Reassailed groups such as the Dawn Bible Students and the Chicago Bible Students. Rutherford had his followers adopt the name Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1931 to distinguish themselves from these others.

**International Bible Students Association** In *The Watch Tower* of April 1, 1910, C.T. Russell instructed his followers in the United States and worldwide to identify themselves and advertise their meetings under this name. This is also the name of the British corporation formed by Russell in 1914, which continues to function under the direction of the parent corporation, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.

**Jehovah’s Witnesses** Joseph Rutherford had congregations associated with the Watchtower organization adopt this name in 1931 to distinguish themselves from other Russellite groups that shared the designation Bible Students. But the organization has not incorporated under this name as a legal entity.

**People’s Pulpit Association** This legal corporation was formed in 1909 under the Membership Corporation Law of New York to care for operations in that state. It was renamed Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Inc., in 1939, and then in 1956 it took on the present form of its name, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

**Second Adventist(s)** Referring to the return, or second advent, of Christ, this is another name for Adventists (see above).

**Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.** Originally formed as the People's Pulpit Association, this New York legal corporation works under the direction of the parent Pennsylvania corporation, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. The New York corporation is officially the branch organization in charge of activities in the United States.

**Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society** Originally named Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society, this Pennsylvania corporation was formed in 1884 to carry on C.T. Russell's publishing work. It serves as the parent corporation for Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. Various corporate bodies have been established in other lands, but all work under the direction of the Pennsylvania corporation. The primary purpose for the multiple corporations has been to meet the requirements for owning real estate under the various legal jurisdictions where the sect operates.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>**Reed, David A.,** *Jehovah's Witness Literature: A Critical Guide to Watchtower Publications*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1993.



## Other Sources of Materials on Jehovah's Witnesses

Ankerberg, John and John Weldon, *The Facts on the Jehovah's Witnesses*, The Anker Series, Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers

Farkas, John R. and David A. Reed, *Mormonism: Changes, Contradictions and Errors*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1995.

Reed, David A.; and Farkas, John R., *How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1994.

Reed, David A, *Mormons Answered Verse by Verse*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1998, c1997.

# Seventh Day Adventists

Three people were visiting and viewing the Grand Canyon--an artist, a pastor, and a cowboy. As they stood on the edge of that massive abyss, each one responded with a cry of exclamation. The artist said, "Ah, what a beautiful scene to paint!" The minister cried, "What a wonderful example of the handiwork of God!" The cowboy mused, "What a terrible place to lose a cow!"

--James S. Hewlett, *Illustrations Unlimited*<sup>44</sup>

Christianity, whether it is suppose to be or not, is a religion on a spectrum. In the middle are the essential doctrines we discussed in the first few pages of these materials. On one of the extremes are the conservatives and on the other, the more liberal denominations. Each have a different view of some of the less essential, but none the less important, doctrines. Out there on one of those edges reside the Seventh Day Adventists. Some will say they are like the lost cow and are a true cult.

Let us examine the evidence about this group . . .

## History

Just as the Mormons have a colorful history, so, too, do the Seventh Day Adventists. But their's is a history set in the Second Coming of Christ, similar to the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses. As we saw, the Witnesses beginning came from the early foundations of the Adventists.

William Miller (1782-1849), originally a Deist, converted to Christianity, becoming a Baptist lay leader. Based upon his study of Scripture, he became convinced there was a code (sound familiar?) in the Bible which contained information on the end of the world and the Second Coming of Jesus. He believed he had a special obligation to teach his findings to others. He commenced his preaching/teaching in 1831. In 1833, he published a pamphlet on end-time prophecy, an effort that was expanded into two books, *Evidences from Scripture* and *History of the Second Coming of Christ*.

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<sup>44</sup>(Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988), p. 411.

Based upon Daniel 8:14 (*And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."*), Miller determined that the Second Coming would occur sometime between two the spring equinoxes of March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. This, of course, did not happen. Miller was temporarily "saved" by one of his followers, Samuel Snow, who interpreted the "tarrying time" referred to in Habakkuk 2:3 (*For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry*).as equal to 7 months and 10 days, delaying the end time to October 22, 1844. This did not come to past either.

Eventually Miller withdrew from leadership of the Group and died shortly thereafter. While his followers called themselves Adventists, everyone else referred to them as Millerites. You may recall that Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, spent much of his learning time as a member of the Adventists.

The Millerites actually split into three distinct groups, each developing an emphasis in a different area, eventually, reuniting to form the present group. Hiram Edson received revelation that Miller was right about events but was wrong about the place. Edson developed the theory of a return to a heavenly sanctuary. Joseph Bates taught the Saturday Sabbath as a perpetual ordinance of the church.

The key group may have been that of Ellen G. White and her husband, the Reverend James White (Adventist). White taught that the 1844 prediction was correct, but that it referred to the start of an Investigative Judgment. This is a time when Christ will judge the dead and the living on earth for righteousness. She predicted that this would soon be followed by the second coming of Jesus. Late in her career, the church voted her the credentials of an ordained minister. She is responsible also for the formal formation of the Seventh Day Adventists in 1863.

In line with the other cultic groups, the Adventists have spawned their own offspring. One Victor Houteff joined the Adventists in 1919. However, many of his beliefs deviated from the Adventist main-line doctrine. He outlined the errors of the Adventists in a book, *The Shepherd's Rod*. The Adventists' reaction to this publication forced Houteff to leave the church. He formed a new sect in 1929 called the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists. This group split further and eventually led to the organization of the Students of the Seven Seals, popularly known as the Branch Davidians. This was the group led by David Koresh, who in 1993, underwent a long standoff with the FBI, with the Branch Davidian's compound being burned down with major loss of life.

The Adventist church has a special interest in health concerns and promotes a belief in vegetarianism. It has played a major role in health research into the dangers of smoking and of diets rich in cholesterol and fats. Perhaps their best "known" member was Dr. John Kellogg, founder of "Kellogg's" cereals. They also promote plans designed to help people stop smoking and stop the consumption of alcoholic

beverages of all types. There are 155 SDA hospitals and 276 clinics, dispensaries, etc. in the world.<sup>45</sup> They also operate a large number of educational institutions at all levels of learning from post-secondary institutions to elementary schools and kindergartens.

The Church has about 9 million baptized members, worldwide, who are "of age" and on the "official" roles. The total number of members and adherents is perhaps double that. They have a growth rate of about 7%.<sup>46</sup>

## Practices

The practices of the Adventists do not significantly differ from those of conservative Christians, except in one or two areas. For example, baptism into the church is done by full immersion. It is preceded by instruction, a personal acceptance of the Scriptures, repentance of sins, and confession of sins. Members are expected to abstain from alcohol, coffee, tea and tobacco, and every "soul-defiling habit". As has been mentioned, the Adventists' interpretation of the Old Testament includes a view of the dietary laws as prohibiting the eating of some foods, effectively making the Adventists vegetarians.

Adventists expect their members to dress simply, to watch only uplifting entertainment, and to shun all questionable worldly amusements, such as the theater and dance. Marriages outside of the faith are discouraged and adultery is the only grounds for divorce. They actively oppose homosexuality. The Adventists are strong promoters of Creationism and college education is promoted and respected. The Adventists have a college graduate rate which is about twice the national average.

So, then, are they a cult?

## Beliefs

The basic beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventists fit within the framework of most conservative Christian groups, especially in terms of what has been defined as the essential doctrines. They believe in creation; the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden; original sin; the virgin birth; the divinity of Christ; the nature of the Trinity;

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<sup>45</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.com>

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

belief in Satan as a rebellious created being; the infallibility of Scriptures as they were originally written; the resurrection of Jesus, and salvation by faith by the atonement of Christ. They do not add works to the salvation doctrine.

But, they also have some other doctrines which do not sit well with many conservative Christians. It is also clear that from one generation to the next, there have been significant differences in the views of the church on questionable doctrines.

- ✍ First, they “highly honor” the writings of Ellen G. White. These written works have been considered as being inspired by God as an authoritative source of truth. This produced some conflict within the Church when research in the 1980's showed that she had borrowed heavily from contemporary writers. The modern statement of the church on this issue is to “highly honor” White’s works, without designating them as inspired or as being on the same level of authority as the Bible. White is said to have possessed a “spirit of prophecy.”
- ✍ Second, they deny the concept of "innate immortality". Their belief is that a person is not naturally immortal. This is commonly referred to as the doctrine of soul sleep. The Adventists teach that when a person dies, they remain unconscious until they are resurrected. Eternal life in a new world is a gift which God will give only to righteous Christians. Unbelievers will be annihilated. Obviously, this means the Adventists do not believe in an actual hell. Further, this teaching shows they do not believe that a person goes to heaven or hell immediately upon death.
- ✍ Third, the second coming of Christ is imminent. Believers should be ready at all times to be removed from earth to be with God in heaven. Their views of the Millennium is that Satan and his angels will be living on earth. After this, the righteous souls will return to earth to cleanse the earth and establish New Jerusalem. The annihilation of the unrighteous will occur at this time. Thus, the universe will be free of sin and sinners. Hell exists as a lake of fire where the unrighteous are "burned up, utterly destroyed, and cease forever to exist." Hell does not exist as a place of eternal torment.
- ✍ Fourth, the Adventist practice the observation of Saturday as their Sabbath (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset). This is taken from the Old Testament, right down to the counting of the time from Jewish tradition and methods.

Does this make the Adventists a cult? Those who say yes, do so on the basis that White’s writings have added to or taken away from the infallible teachings of the Bible. The Adventist have their own “Bible,” the Clear Word Bible. Despite their affirmation of the character of the Bible, the SDA Church demonstrates a different

approach to Scripture in its popular Clear Word Bible. The many changes made to the biblical text in the Clear Word Bible are ultimately destructive to the integrity of God's Word. At issue here is the purpose of the Clear Word Bible. The Clear Word Bible is admittedly a paraphrase created to help church members more easily understand God's Word. At some level, it may be compared to the Living Bible. The issue is whether or not this paraphrase has been deliberately revised to support Adventist doctrines in general and the writings of their prophetess, Ellen G. White, in particular.<sup>47</sup>

It is clear that much of the writing of White is, or has been, viewed as non-orthodox. To quote from Irvine: "We may well pity the poor woman in her ill-health, but we cannot be sentimental about the seriousness of her teachings, which amount to blasphemy and are directly opposed to the Word of God."<sup>48</sup> Earlier on the same page, Irvine referred to White, Mary Baker Eddy (Christian Science), and Helena Petrova Blavatsky (Theosophy) as hysterical neurotic women!

Attached at the end of this chapter is the official statement of beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventist church as published on its web site in March 2000. In so far as the major, essential doctrines are concerned, these statements could be used by any major denomination or church.

The issues involved will ultimately result in a discussion over the proper standing of White's works relative to the Bible. In years past, it is clear that the Seventh Day Adventist church elevated White's writings, especially *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, to a level equal to or above the Bible. If so, White's heretical positions make the church a cult. But, as you review the statement of faith, note that the official position, and indeed, the practice in most Seventh Day Adventist churches, is to treat White's writings as important, but not to see them as equal to or superior to the Bible.

One point of contention is the issue of the completion of the atonement at the Cross. Gerstner cites other Adventist writings, particularly those of Biederwolf, to conclude that the church does not believe the work of Christ completely is effective in blotting

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<sup>47</sup>The Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry web site (<http://www.carm.org>) lists other sites on its Research page which are both for and against Seventh Day Adventists as a cult. It is interesting to note that Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, treats the Adventists in an appendix chapter, concluding they are not a cult. McDowell and Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, do not discuss the Seventh Day Adventists at all, implying under the structure of this book that they are not a cult.

<sup>48</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York, Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 154.

out sin.<sup>49</sup> The great atonement for sins is still in the future when Christ completes His work. This issue is tied into the questionable doctrine of the return of Christ to the heavenly sanctuary. He will complete the atonement when he comes out of the heavenly sanctuary. Keep this thought in mind as you review what follows.

There is no doubt that some of these positions are contrary to good Baptist (conservative) beliefs. But, where does one draw the line? Those against the Adventists would say the existence of the aberrant doctrines on soul sleep, the Sabbath, and the annihilation of the soul are sufficient to classify the Adventists as a cult, especially with their colorful history. On the other hand, none of these doctrines have anything to do with salvation rooted in a firm belief in Jesus Christ. The position on atonement is, however, a different matter. If one reviews the statement of faith of the Adventist church, paragraph 23, on Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary, many come away with a view that the church teaches an incomplete atonement. What is the "work" Christ is now performing in the heavenly sanctuary? How does it relate to the complete atonement of the Cross? Clearly, the position statement is based upon the efforts to undo the embarrassment of the miscalculations of Christ's return by Miller. But, what does it really mean?

Perhaps, this is one of those situations which demands individual prayer and study prior to making a determination that an Adventist is a cultist.

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<sup>49</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, 23.

## Official Statement of Faith

1. The Holy Scriptures: The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.).
2. The Trinity: There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)
3. The Father: God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)
4. The Son: God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)
5. The Holy Spirit: God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation, and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and



those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

6. Creation: God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)
7. The Nature of Man: Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)
8. The Great Controversy: All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan, God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual devastation at the time of the worldwide flood. Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation. (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8; 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)

9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ: In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. (John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11.)
10. The Experience of Salvation: In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need, acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment. (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16; Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5; Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8; 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.)
11. The Church: The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages,

the purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-11; Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18.)

12. The Remnant and Its Mission: The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1-14.)
13. Unity in the Body of Christ: The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23.)
14. Baptism: By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings. (Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.)
15. The Lord's Supper: The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in

Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians. (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17.)

16. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries: God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love. (Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)
17. The Gift of Prophecy: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and was manifested in the ministry of Ellen. G. White. As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10.)
18. The Law of God: The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments. This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men. The obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens Christian witness. (Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14.)

19.     The Sabbath: The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.)
20.     Stewardship: We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27.)
21.     Christian Behavior: We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with the principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies, we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholesomeness, joy, and goodness. (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph. 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3 John 2.)

22. **Marriage and the Family:** Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)
23. **Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary:** There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)

24. The Second Coming of Christ: The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns, the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore exhorted to be ready at all times. (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14; Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)
25. Death and Resurrection: The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later. (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14; Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10.)
26. The Millennium and the End of Sin: The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city; but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever. (Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal. 4:1; Eze. 28:18, 19.)
27. The New Earth: On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.)<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup><http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/index.html>

# Armstrongism

## Worldwide Church of God

. . . I found that the popular church teachings and practices were not based on the Bible. They had originated, as research in history had revealed, in paganism. Numerous Bible prophecies foretold it; the amazing unbelievable truth was, the SOURCE of these popular beliefs and practices of professing Christianity, was quite largely paganism, and human reasoning and custom, NOT the bible!<sup>51</sup>

Herbert W. Armstrong

Mr. Armstrong's spiritual odyssey was launched primarily through his wife's discovery that "obedience to God's spiritual laws summed up in the Ten Commandments is necessary for salvation. Not that our works of keeping the commandments save us, but rather that sin is the transgression of God's spiritual law. Christ does not save us in our sins but from our sins. We must repent of sin, repent of transgressing God's law which means turning from disobedience as a prior condition to receiving God's free gift."<sup>52</sup>

## Israelism

To understand the background of this group, it is necessary to go back into the history of what is generally referred to as British-Israelism or Anglo-Israelism. The concept behind this group is that the British/Canadian/Americans and both the literal and spiritual decedents of the ancient Israelites, particularly the "ten lost tribes."

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<sup>51</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, California: Campus Crusade for Christ, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1989, 114, quoting Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1967, 298.

<sup>52</sup>Walter W. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 303, quoting Herbert W. Armstrong, *The Autobiography of Herbert W. Armstrong*, Pasadena: Ambassador College Press, 1967, 284.



The concept of the “lost tribes” arises from the schism and conquest of Israel as a nation. After King Solomon’s death in 931 B.C., the ten northern tribes of Israel followed the King’s slave master, Jeroboam, forming a “new” kingdom. Only Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, and the kingly line of David. For their idol worship and disobedience, God allowed the northern tribes to be carried into captivity by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. The southern kingdom of Judah is not conquered for another hundred years or so. In a series of conquests from 605 B.C. through 586 B.C., Judah is carried into captivity by the Babylonians.

The Babylonians had conquered the Assyrians a decade or so earlier. The Babylonians themselves would fall to the MDO-Persian alliance under Cyrus. Cyrus would issue the decree allowing the Jewish nation to return to Palestine about 539 B.C. The issue behind the “lost” tribes is whether or not members of all twelve tribes returned home, could be accounted for from a genealogical view point, and / or remained in the Holy Land throughout the period of captivity. The Anglo-Israelite supporters answer these questions in the negative (contrary to the Scriptural record found in Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and so on).

The promoters of Anglo-Israelism teach that the tribes retained their identity, but became lost to history. The tribes relocated to the British Isles, bringing with them the stone used in the coronation of King David. It is now known as the Stone of Scone and is still used for the coronation of British queens and kings.

## History

Armstrongism is the birth-child of Herbert W. Armstrong (1896-1986). He started the *Worldwide Church of God* in Eugene, Oregon in 1933. It is his writings that have most influenced Anglo-Israelism over the past seventy years, although as we shall see, the state of the modern Worldwide Church of God is, at least on paper, considerably different than that created by Armstrong. Martin quotes a statement of George Burnside to the effect that Armstrong is “an off-shoot of an off-shoot of an off-shoot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.”<sup>53</sup> It is not particularly clear this is true.

At Armstrong’s death in 1986, the church claimed a membership of 150,000. By 1996 this number had been cut in half. The membership is spread over 100 countries. Among other reasons, the leaders which followed Armstrong did not have the strong personal influence which had been exercised by Armstrong.

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<sup>53</sup>Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 305.

Armstrong's son, Garner Ted Armstrong, was the original prince-in-training. Although desiring to be a movie star, Garner became the national broadcasting voice of the WCG. But due to sexual improprieties, Garner Armstrong was excommunicated from the church on two different occasions. The second and final time occurred as much for the son's "liberal" views as for the sexual issues. As a result, Joseph W. Tkach succeeded Armstrong senior as Pastor General. Tkach made major changes to WCG teachings, and brought them into closer alignment with traditional Evangelical beliefs. After his death in 1995, his son Joseph W. Tkach, Jr. assumed control and continued the changes.<sup>54</sup>

When Garner Armstrong was dismissed from the church, he established his own church, the *Church of God International* of Tyler, Texas. Both the son's church and the WCG have moved much closer to traditional teachings and there is a clear indication that they should not be currently classified as a cult.

Other step children and splinter groups also include the *Global Church of God*, *Living Church of God*, *Philadelphia Church of God*, and *United Church of God*.

## Beliefs

What does the World Wide Church of God teach?

. . . A.D. 69, the apostles and the church fled to Pella from Jerusalem according to Jesus' warning (Matthew 24:15, 16). That was the END of the organized proclaiming of Christ's gospel by His church to the world! . . . For eighteen and one-half centuries. All worldwide organized proclaiming of Christ's gospel was stamped out . . ."<sup>55</sup>

Walter Martin in his work *Kingdom of the Cults* clearly marks Armstrongism and the WCG as a cult. This characterization is based upon the elder Armstrong's statement of beliefs for the WCG which included:



Identification of the British and American people as descendants of two sons of Jacob: Ephraim and Manasseh.

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<sup>54</sup> It is to be noted that while the WCG may have changed its doctrinal position, there are still groups of true British/Anglo-Israelism practioners at work in the world. This is not a cult which has entirely died away.

<sup>55</sup> McDowell, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, 115, quoting Armstrong's autobiography, page 502, 503.

■ Belief that the term "British" is derived from the ancient Hebrew word "beriyth" (covenant).

■ Belief that the term "Saxon" originated as "*Isaac's Sons*"

■ As the "lost" ancient Israelite tribe of Dan spread across Europe, they named many rivers, towns etc. after themselves (e.g. Danube River, Denmark, Donegal).

■ Rejection of the traditional Christian concept of the Trinity as being of pagan origin. Armstrong accepted a modified Arian view of the nature of God; this was a teaching by Arius in the late third century CE. They believed that deity consisted of a dual divinity: **The Eternal** (their translation of the Hebrew name of God (Yahweh) and **Jesus**. He taught that the Holy Spirit is a power, not a person. He promoted the concept of the "*Family of God*", which consisted of Jehovah, Jesus and human believers in the WCG who became Gods; in other words, a plurality of personal gods.

■ At the crucifixion, Jesus' body and spirit died for three days and three nights. He was later raised by the Father and his human body was transformed into a spirit body.

■ Belief in Jesus is a "necessary and sufficient" requirement for salvation. But, members will be rewarded in heaven according to their works, that is, in following the commandments of God (the 10 Commandments, dietary laws, holy days etc.). This is self-effort, not grace, since failure to obey the commandments results in a loss of "salvation."

■ Identification of the WCG with the "*Philadelphia church*" in Revelation 3:7.

■ Rejection of the concept of Hell as being pagan in origin. People who die without meeting the dual requirements (faith and works) for salvation will be resurrected, and taught Biblical truths. If they still do not accept the teachings, they will be cast into a lake of fire and simply cease to exist.

Armstrong observed all of the Jewish feast days, worshiped on Saturday (the legalism of the Galatians?), and practiced the Lord's Supper, Baptism, and foot washing as the ordinances of the church.

Armstrong's teachings are also full of false prophecies. Armstrong taught the

original church of the apostles undertook two nineteen-year ministries (A.D. 31 to 69) and then departed from the faith. To allow mankind another “chance,” God decided to allow true believers two more cycles of nineteen years. According to Armstrong, this work began in 1934, thus, it should have ended in 1972. In the mid-sixties, Armstrong issued several writing prophecies predicting great stress and nation-wide drought, famine, epidemics, and the like. Armstrong called this time the commencement of the Great Tribulation of Revelations. Still, Armstrong was wrong and prophets are not prophets if they are wrong, at any time.

## The post-Armstrong Church

However, under the leadership of the Tkachs, the WCG has drastically modified its statement of faith and some of its practices. The church now recognized the doctrine of the Trinity, the virgin birth, death, and Resurrection of Jesus, the existence of the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Godhead, and Satan as a created, fallen being. Hank Hanegraaff, Walter Martin’s successor at the, Christian Research Institute, in a three part interview program with Tkach, Jr. on the Bible Answer Man, blessed the WCG as Christian, removing the stain of cultism Martin and others had placed on the church. This recognition moved the church out of the definition of a cult. In particular, Hanegraaff acknowledged that the church had

- ✍ Abandoned its *"obsession...with the legalistic interpretation of the Old Testament"*
- ✍ Abandoned its belief in "British Israelism"
- ✍ Abandoned the view that God is a family of many spirit beings into which humans can be born

Most likely this adoption of the essential beliefs of Christianity by the WCG is the main reason for the decrease in its membership. The church still observes some other practices not in line with conservative views (Sabbath worship, observing the feast days), but its overall teachings are not in line with Christianity’s.

Only time will determine if the transition will be steadfast.

# Church of Christ, Scientists

## Christian Scientists

I should blush to write of Science and Health with the Key to the Scriptures, as I have, were it of human origin, and I apart from God, its author; but as I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of heaven in Divine Metaphysics, I cannot be super-modest of the Christian Science text-book.

Mary Baker G. Eddy<sup>56</sup>

*Syncretism* is the blending the worship of false gods with the worship of the true God. The most prominent example of syncretism in Scriptures is found in 1 Kings 12:24 where Jeroboam takes the Northern tribes away from Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Jeroboam becomes the first King of the Northern kingdoms, generally called Israel in Scripture, as opposed to the Southern kingdom composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. To keep the people of the Northern Kingdom from going to Jerusalem to the Temple for the feasts, Jeroboam built two altars, one in the north and one in the south. He place golden calves at these altars and created a priesthood to serve the people and to "talk to God." It was a system which very much resemble that in the former united nation. But, it was a cult, the cult of the "golden calf." For this sin, the people were judged, although it would take God a couple hundred years of patience before He would actually execute this judgment.

But, in about 721 B.C., the Northern kingdoms were defeated by the Assyrians and carried off into captivity. One of the clearly stated reasons for this judgment was the creation of the golden calf cult.

### **2 Kings 17:16**

*So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.*

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<sup>56</sup>As quoted by William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York : Loizeaux Brothers, Inc, Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 66.

God did not see the syncretism as worship to Him alone.

We have seen already that this is what man does, he puts God in a box of his own choosing. He makes God to look the way man wants Him to look, like a golden calf, or a tree, or something similar. A.W. Tozer sums it up by writing that “Left to ourselves we tend immediately to reduce God to manageable terms.”<sup>57</sup>

Manageable terms – we put God in a box, we make Him act and look and think and demand they we want Him to be. Isn’t this a picture of the cults?<sup>58</sup>

The period just before and after the Civil War was a time for religious considerations. In general terms, the Mormon movement started in 1830, the Seventh-Day Adventists came the following year, Spiritualism (which we will study in a later chapter) began in 1848, Russellism (or Jehovah’s Witnesses) started around 1872, and Christian Science arrived 1876.<sup>59</sup> As we have already observed in the other religions, all of these are, or border upon, syncretism. Indeed, in 1963 Anthony Hoekema would write the work, *The Four Major Cults*,<sup>60</sup> naming Mormonism, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists as the major threats to Christianity. We have already considered three of these, including the open issue of the status of the Seventh Day Adventists (indeed, an issue that caused many to be critical of Hoekema’s book when it was published). Now, we will look at Christian Scientists.

## Gnosticism

Paul’s letter to the Colossians seems to fight a new cult which would become grow into what we now call Gnosticism. The name *gnosticism* comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge,” and stresses the character of this heresy. Gnosticism was a philosophical system built upon Greek philosophy that stressed matter as evil but spirit as good. This creates a dualism of thought and ultimately creates a picture whereby Jesus the human is evil because He is material, but Christ is good, because He is spiritual. Obvious, this entire approach questions the deity of Jesus.

To resolve this issue, two different views were adopted. One held that since matter is evil, Jesus could not have actually come in human form; He only “appeared” in human form. Since this is but an “appearance,” He only “appeared” to suffer on the Cross. Or, the other suggestion was that the divine Spirit or Logos came upon the

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<sup>57</sup>A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, San Francisco: Harpers Collins, 1961, 8.

<sup>58</sup>For that matter, isn’t this a picture of the way you act most of the time. We are too busy and preoccupied to study God’s Word to understand who God really is.

<sup>59</sup>Howard Frederic Vos, *Exploring church history [computer file]*, electronic ed., *Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994 by Howard F. Vos.

<sup>60</sup>Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963.

human Jesus, similar to Old Testament empowerments, but that the Logos departed prior to the crucifixion. In other words, God did not die on the Cross. Salvation becomes a philosophical knowing of the truth. A modern form of gnosticism is Christian Science.<sup>61</sup>

## History

**EDDY, MARY MORSE BAKER, GLOVER, PATTERSON (1821–1910)**, an author and founder of the Christian Science church. Born in New Hampshire, she received her early education at home and the Sanbornton Academy in Tilton, New Hampshire. In 1843 she married Colonel George Washington Glover who died the following year, leaving her with a son, her only child. In 1853 she married Daniel Patterson, a dentist, who left her. She then married Asa Gilbert Eddy in 1877. Often ill as a child, she was attracted to the teachings of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby. She suffered a long time as the result of an accident, then felt that her health was restored and devoted her life to the doctrines referred to as “Christian Science.” She wrote *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, founded the monthly paper *Christian Science Journal*, and the daily paper *Christian Science Monitor*. In 1879 she founded the First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston and in 1881 the Massachusetts Metaphysical College to train her followers. Christian Science denies the doctrines of the deity of Christ, the Trinity, sin, death, disease, and Satan.<sup>62</sup>

Baker’s story is one of single-mindedness as she formed a religion. She had been raised as a Congregationalist, so her background was mainline conservative Christianity. Phineas Quimby was a blacksmith (or a clockmaker, according to some sources) in Portland, Maine, who practiced hypnotism. Quimby’s fascination with hypnotism was based upon his beliefs that sickness was the result of negative thoughts and could be cured with positive attitudes. Some credit Quimby as advertising his methods as the Science of Health, or Christian Science. If so, Baker stole the name as well as the foundation of her beliefs from Quimby. It is unclear, however, if Quimby ever tied his teachings to any form of religion.

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<sup>61</sup>Some see gnostic characteristics in other religions as well, such as those we have already studied. While the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses may have some gnostic elements, they are not true examples of the philosophy of the gnostic structure of the second century.

<sup>62</sup>Hammack, Mary L., *A Dictionary of Women in Church History*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) 1997, c1984. It is interesting to note that by birth Joseph Smith (Mormons), William Miller (Seventh Day Adventists), Ellen G. White (Seventh Day Adventists), and Mary Baker Eddy were all from New England. Could the strict, conservation Christian background of the region during this time frame have had a “backlash” effect in the formation of bad doctrine and revolt against God?

Although not completely following all of Quimby's teachings, Eddy adopted many of his ideas, ultimately applying them to her own experiences, claiming to discover the divine law of life. In terms of the new religion, 1866 becomes an important date. Meditating on Matthew 9:2, Eddy claims to have been healed from injuries resulting from a fall. She soon began her own healing ministry, based on the conviction that the "Eternal Mind" is the source of all being, matter is nonexistent, disease is caused by erroneous thoughts, and power is released through the teaching of "Christian Science."

In 1875 she formed a small band of followers into a society at Lynn, Massachusetts, and soon published her textbook of Christian Science, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. In 1877 she married Asa G. Eddy, one of her early followers, and together with other friends they established the Church of Christ, Scientist, in 1879 in Boston.<sup>63</sup> In 1881, Eddy opened a metaphysical college and charged \$300 for 12 healing lessons. The Church was reorganized in 1892, with the disbanding of the Association, College and Church. The movement was then concentrated within The Mother Church, The First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston. Although she continued to manage church affairs until her death in 1910, she removed herself from public contact and lived in seclusion, in order to revise her book and guide the movement. At the time of Eddy's death in 1910 the Church of Christ, Scientists, claimed a 100,000 members and Eddy was a multi-millionaire. *Science and Health* has been translated and distributed in seventeen different languages.

Mrs. Eddy, herself, asserted that her beliefs were derived from new interpretations of biblical passages, not from human sources. She appears to have taught that her writings were not an "add-on" to the Bible. Rather, she had discovered the "science" of scriptures. Indeed, her devoted friend and colleague describes her thus: "Christ Jesus was the masculine representative of the fatherhood of God. In this age Mary Baker Eddy is the feminine representative of the motherhood of God."<sup>64</sup> Through a spiritual interpretation of the Bible she had rediscovered its original truths as believed in and practiced by the early Christian church. This is, of course, is the claim of all cults, to be the "true church of Christ."

It is worth noting that Martin and others maintain that studies of Mrs. Eddy's writings show that she plagiarized several different sources to write *Science and Health*. In particular, she seems to have borrowed heavily from Quimby's *Questions and Answers*, and from a paper on *The Metaphysical Religion of Hegel* by Frances Lieber.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Douglas, J. D., Comfort, Philip W. & Mitchell, Donald, Editors, *Who's Who in Christian History*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1992.

<sup>64</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, 74, quoting Mrs. Stetson as quoted by Altman K. Swihart, *Since Mrs. Eddy*, 56.

<sup>65</sup>Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 129-131.



While the church went through a period of rapid growth during the first half of the 20th century, its membership leveled out in the early 1950 and has been declining since then. Since The Mother Church does not publish statistics, true membership is unknown. Estimates range between 150,000 and 400,000. Two of Richard Nixon's key aides, H. R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, were Christian Scientists (Nixon was a Quaker).

It is estimated that the Church has about 2300 branch congregations in 60 countries, with 1600 of these are in the US. While the church does have actual church buildings, much of their practice comes in the Christian Science Reading Rooms where the public is invited to read the Bible and literature published by the Church. In 1908, Mrs. Eddy founded The Christian Science Monitor, an international newspaper, whose employees have won 6 Pulitzer prizes. A cable TV channel launched in 1991 was short lived and was terminated for financial reasons.<sup>66</sup>

There is no ordained clergy in the Church. Services are conducted by Readers who read from the Bible, from "Science and Health" and from lesson-sermons sent from The Mother Church. Further, since healing is obtained by spiritual power, the church has no hospitals or doctors. However, it does have Lay Christian Science practitioners who are trained in Church principles and present a prayer-based healing ministry to members and the public as an alternative to conventional medical services. In place of hospitals, the church has a series of nursing homes.

## Beliefs of the Christian Science

The following doctrines are referenced out of the primary Christian Science work, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, by Mary Baker Eddy. It is supposed to be a companion to the Bible. *Science and Health* together with the Bible are called the Pastor of Christian Science.

1. God is infinite...and there is no other power or source, S&H, 471:18.
2. God is Universal Principle, S&H 331:18-19
3. God cannot indwell a person, S&H 336:19-20
4. God is the only intelligence in the universe, including man S&H 330:11-12
5. God is Mind, S&H 330:20-21; 469:13
6. God is the Father-Mother, S&H 331:30; 332:4
7. The Trinity is Life, Truth, and Love, S&H 331:26
8. Belief in the traditional doctrine of the Trinity is polytheism, S&H 256:9-11
9. Christ is the spiritual idea of sonship S&H 331:30-31
10. Jesus was not the Christ, S&H 333:3-15; 334:3
11. Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared... S&H 361:12-13

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<sup>66</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org>

12. Jesus did not reflect the fullness of God, S&H 336:20-21
13. Jesus did not die, S&H 45:32-46:3
14. The Holy Spirit is divine science, S&H 331:31
15. There is no devil, S&H 469:13-17
16. There is no sin, S&H 447:24
17. Evil and good are not real, S&H, 330:25-27; 470:9-14
18. Matter, sin, and sickness are not real, but only illusions S&H 335:7-15; 447:27-28.
19. Life is not material or organic S&H, 83:21
20. The sacrifice of Jesus was not sufficient to cleanse from sin S&H, 25:6.
21. True healings are the result of true belief, S&H, 194:6

Additionally,

- ☐ Christian Scientists prefer not to use doctors, medicine, or immunizations.
- ☐ Christian Science Practitioners are used to help people through the false reality of illness.
- ☐ Proper prayer and training are employed to battle the "non-reality" of illness.
- ☐ They have no ordinances like the Lord's Supper or baptism.
- ☐ Church services are interspersed with Bible readings and readings from Science and Health.
- ☐ Mary Baker Eddy is highly regarded as a revelator of God's word, almost equal to Jesus.

As can be observed, these are not the teachings of the Bible. Jesus is a “way-shower” for the Christian Scientist. He leads the way to spiritual healing. Salvation does not exist in any true form in the Christian Science movement.

Like the other cults, Christian Science has spawned some off-spring. Two are clearly the direct result of Mrs. Eddy’s efforts.

- ☐ Emma Hopkins left the church during Mrs. Eddy's lifetime and created a movement which developed into New Thought; that group in turn influenced other new religious groups.
- ☐ Anne Bill led a breakaway sect, the Christian Science Parent Church, after Mrs. Eddy's death. This evolved into the Church of Integration, which expired in the 1950's.

Beyond these two, however, Mrs. Eddy’s general approach to Scriptures has seeped into some mainline communities. The “Divine Mind” is a power concept for man wanting to be in control of things. Those who appear to have adopted some portions of Mrs. Eddy’s approach have secularized the concepts to refer to the human mind and have grafted it onto traditional Christian belief. This is seen in Norman Vincent

Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking*, Bishop Sheen's *Peace of Soul*, and Rev. Robert Schuller's *Possibility Thinking*.

A closing comment on the viability of Christian Science comes from a secular source. One of the sources used to develop these materials is the web site ReligiousTolerance.org, a clearly non-Christian site. The OCTR group which maintains this web site has the following closing statement on its page about Christian Science.

We are distressed at the lack of hard data available concerning the effectiveness of faith healing generally and of Christian Science healing methods in particular. We consider this a major ethical concern. If either conventional medical treatments or faith healing is marginally better than the other, then thousands of lives could be saved each year in the U.S. by inducing people to switch to the more effective treatment.

# New Thought Movement

*Peace, Power, Plenty*

We affirm the new thought of God as Universal Love, Life, Truth and Joy, in whom we live, move, and have our being, and by whom we are held together; that His mind is our mind now, that realizing our oneness with Him means love, truth, peace, health, and plenty, not only in our lives but in the giving out of these fruits of the Spirit to others.

Declaration of Principles, 1916  
International New Thought Alliance

We saw in the last chapter that Christian Science produced off-spring. One of these is the general movement known as New Thought. While still a force to be reckoned with today, it is not a “religious” movement as such. It is more proper to view New Thought as a bridge between the past and the future. Temporarily making myself a prophet, I personally believe that the flow of history over the past 150 years brings false religions to a focal point in what we call New Age. There are a lot of paths moving toward this center. There are many cults and false religions in the world which remain strong. But the drift of false teaching moves more and more toward the New Age philosophy, a philosophy which has the “benefit” of being changeable and bringing all of the religions under one umbrella.

Along the early path on this movement is the road which leads to Christian Science, New Thought Movement, and the Unity School of Christianity. We will not spend much time on New Thought but we should briefly address its background and philosophy, for it sowed the seeds of the modern New Age movement. As Solomon wrote, “*And there is nothing new under the sun*” (Ecc 1:9). Satan just takes the old tricks and repackages them with new, shining outer wrappings.

## History

Does this group begin with an out-shoot of Christian Science? Some say yes, others are less emphatic. What is clear is that the roots of New Thought go back to Phineas

Quimby, although many actually view Ralph Waldo Emerson as the real spiritual father of New Thought.<sup>67</sup>

As we have seen Mary Baker Eddy used the works of Quimby in writing her book, *Science and Health*. Quimby did, however, publish his works, although there remains a debate over whether or not he was religious, interested in religion, or was just a quack.

“Can a theory be found capable of practice which can separate Truth from Error? I undertake to say there is a method of reasoning which, being understood, can separate one from the other. Man is made up of truth and belief and if he is deceived into a belief that he has or is liable to have a disease, the belief is catching and the effect follows it.”<sup>68</sup>

According to Braden, upon Quimby’s death one Warren Felt Evans, a Swedenborgian<sup>69</sup> clergyman who claimed to have been healed by Quimby, took up the banner. Evans wrote two books before *Science and Health* was published. Both took up positions developed by Quimby. All of this becomes relatively unimportant in the grand scheme of life.

There is no single New Thought organization. The entire movement is just that, a view point shared by many, each with its own flavor, like ice cream with thirty-one different flavors in the store at any given point in time. One New Thought historian writes:

Interest in mental healing gave the disciples of the New Thought a point of view, a way of approaching all questions, a way of looking at life as a whole . . . The devotees were eager to show that New Thought not only stood for a method of healing, but a philosophy, a positive or affirmative idealism, hence, for religions, applied Christianity, the rediscovery of the doctrine of healing.<sup>70</sup>

It is in the late 1890s that the movement came together to embrace the concepts of healing, inspiration power, prosperity, and general well-being. The International New Thought Alliance was formed in 1914. While originally a member of the Alliance,

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<sup>67</sup>Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949, 130.

<sup>68</sup>Braden, *These Also Believe*, 133, quoting International New Thought Alliance, *Mind Remakes Your World*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1944, quoting Quimby, xii.

<sup>69</sup>Another cult we will study later.

<sup>70</sup>Braden, *These Also Believe*, 135, quoting Horatio W. Dresser, *History of the New Thought Movement*, New York: Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1919, 190.

the Unity School of Christianity, by far the largest single New Thought organization, soon withdrew from the Alliance to pursue its own path.

The New Thought movement is fundamentally pantheism – God is all and all is God. The individual is identified with the whole. “In essence, the life of God and the life of man are identically the same, and so are one.”<sup>71</sup> Viewed in this fashion, New Thought becomes a mild dissent from the extreme position of the Christian Scientist. Any difference is merely one of degree. The development of this movement shows that the “theology” came first, then the leaders of the movement, rather than having a leader who developed the theology (unless, of course, one counts Quimby as the leader, a position he never held).

## Beliefs of the New Thought Movement

Since New Thought is a series of developed movements and not a single organization, they do not all agree upon the same things. The underlying premise is the immediate availability of God. To quote Braden, this is a “conscious and practical application of spiritual thought force to the solution of human problems; the inevitability that good shall come to every soul.”<sup>72</sup> This doctrinal statement of the New Thought movement shows the appeal such a position would have for many. We saw that pluralism defines salvation of a moral improvement. Here is a finite statement of this type of salvation, good coming to every soul. Braden estimated that as many as 15-20 million people were influenced by the New Thought movement.<sup>73</sup> Today, clearly, the biggest single organization so influenced is Unity, which we shall study next.

The great impact of New Thought comes not from an organization, but from individual publications. Unity, as we shall see, produces huge volumes of materials. Trine’s book *In Tune with the Infinite* was circulated without any New Thought banner or promoter and by 1949 had sold over a million copies. Emerson’s writings are filled with New Thought. One Emmet Fox filled Carnegie Hall with huge crowds. It is a religion which appeals to the intellect. It is a point of view which helps to sow the seeds of rebellion against Christianity.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, 64, quoting Robert W. Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite*, 13.

<sup>72</sup>Braden, *These Also Believe*, 129.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>74</sup>We noted earlier that many of the founders of the major cults had roots in New England. The same is true of many of the New Thought leaders. Emerson, Thoreau, Channing, Parker, Bronson Alcott, and others, all rebelled against the strict Calvinism of New England religious thought. They sought innovation and were not afraid of new ideas. Truly this is another gospel.

Compared to Christianity, the doctrinal beliefs of the New Thought movement look like this:

- ✍ The Bible is a record of man's insight into religious truth, but is not a revelation from God.<sup>75</sup> Truth comes by discovery from within, not by revelation from without.
- ✍ We have already seen the quote of Trine's to the effect that God and man are the same. God is described as Life, Principle, Light, Love, Truth, and so forth.
- ✍ Unlike Christian Science, New Thought believes in the reality of matter and of man. Man is changed into God-man by the degree of openness one has to the divine inflow.
- ✍ Sin is not a concept. God is good and evil is a term used to imply the opposite of good.
- ✍ Jesus is one who illustrated through His life and teachings "the nature of Reality as Love, Wisdom and Law."<sup>76</sup>
- ✍ Christ is not a person but a principle that all may attain. He is, therefore, not one with the Father.
- ✍ Redemption is the process of getting "in tune with the infinite," that is "with God." But, this is accomplished from within, by entering into one's self to discover the "inward presence." This is salvation. It includes physical healing.
- ✍ Repentance, then, is turning away from our troublesome desires to follow the divine inner force.
- ✍ New Thought is a religion of the here and now, so it has not eschatological outlook.

Notice that under this approach, man may actually surpass Jesus, for man may have more of the mind of Christ than Jesus Himself possessed.

New Thought lives on today in such groups as Divine Science, Home of Truth, Church of the Truth, Institute of Religious Science, and the Unity School of Christianity.<sup>77</sup> It is to this last group that we shall next turn.

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<sup>75</sup>Indeed, Holmes defines the Bible as "The Sacred book or books of any race of people . . . the sacred writings of any religion which is used as authority." Holmes, 14, quoted by Braden, 141. See next footnote for full citation.

<sup>76</sup>Braden, *These Also Believe*, 140, quoting Ernest Holmes, *New Thought Terms and Their Meanings*, New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1942, 71.

<sup>77</sup>For a link site of listings to current New Thought groups, use <http://websyte.com/alan/index.htm>

# Unity School of Christianity

"God slumbers in the rocks. God stirs in the flowers. God awakens in Man."

"The second birth is that in which we 'put on Christ.' It is a process of mental adjustment and body transmutation that takes place right here on earth."

Charles Fillmore

Scripture may be a satisfactory authority for those who are not themselves in direct communion with the Lord.<sup>78</sup>

If Christian Science looks strong under the microscope, Unity is an odder mix with more strength, for Unity grows out a disagreement with the teachings of Christian Science. Where Christian Science carried the Gnostic view of matter to the extreme of denying the reality of matter, Unity sees matter as real. So real in fact that one of their main teachings is the concept of reincarnation. Unity becomes a mix of Gnosticism and Hinduism, creating a unique blend of religion, especially for the turn of the clock from the 1800s to the 1900s. This is syncretism at its finest. Unfortunately, Unity is a cult with great appeal. Its membership is over two one-half million people!<sup>79</sup>

Out of the American movement has also sprung an off-shot group in Canada that has become successful in its on right. The Association of Unity Churches – Canada operates to “supplement” the actions of Unity School of Christianity.

The School works out of “centers,” not out of traditional churches.

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<sup>78</sup>Walter W. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 284, quoting *Unity*, October 1896, vol. 7, 400.

<sup>79</sup>Walter W. Martin, *Rise of the Cults*, Santa Ana, California: Vision House Publishers, 1955, 1977, 86.



## History

Founded by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore, Unity's birth comes in Kansas City about 1889. Charles was a spiritist, with an interest in Hinduism. Myrtle was raised a Methodist. Both became involved in Christian Science, but became disenchanted with the teachings that denied the reality of matter. Among other doctrines, the mix of wanting to accept the reality of matter and the teachings of Hinduism combined to form a belief in reincarnation. Charles Fillmore is recorded as stating that he was the reincarnation of the Apostle Paul!

The story is that in 1886, the Fillmore's went to a lecture by one E.B. Weeks. Weeks made the statement that he was "a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness." Myrtle took the statement to heart, reciting it over and over again. She was eventually healed and attributed the healing to this statement and her "faith." While Charles first refused this belief, his investigations into religions (mostly Hinduism and Buddhism) and into the science of the mind, he took up his wife's meditation approach. His withered leg was healed and the new religious system was off and running.

The couple did have difficulty finding a name for their new religion. At first it was called Modern Thought (1889), then Christian Science Thought (1890). Pressure from Mary Baker Eddy caused the Fillmores to change the name again, this time to Thought (1891). The name Unity was adopted in 1895.

The mix of philosophical and religious principles which have gone into Unity make it a mind science cult. An example of the extreme approach of the teaching of Unity will be found in this Unity statement:

God is loving . . . . God does not love anybody. . . . God is the love in everybody and everything. . . . God is love. . . . God exercises none of his attributes except through the inner consciousness of the universe and man.<sup>80</sup>

## Beliefs of Unity

Unity School of Christianity

- ✍ Denies the Trinity,
- ✍ Denies the deity of Jesus and the personality of the Holy Spirit,

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<sup>80</sup>Martin, *Rise of the Cults* , 87, quoting *Jesus Christ Heals*, Unity School of Christianity, 1944, 31 and 32.

- ✍ Jesus was a man, but Christ is a consciousness we all possess within us. Christ is the one complete union of the “perfect man” and the “divine mind.”
- ✍ Denies the necessity of the atonement of Jesus for our sins. Atonement is the reconciliation of one’s mind with the divine mind.
- ✍ The Holy Spirit is the power of the divine mind within all of us.
- ✍ Denies the existence heaven, hell, and sin
- ✍ Denies the existence of the devil.
- ✍ Teaches reincarnation.
- ✍ Are largely vegetarians.
- ✍ Teaches that experience, if you are 'in tune' with God, is more accurate and reliable than the Bible.
- ✍ God is a divine universal consciousness.
- ✍ Man is a part of that Divine Consciousness and is divine **by nature**.

While denying that Jesus is God in flesh, Unity does find Him to be the *ethical* Messiah of the world since “He remained in a high state of spiritual consciousness.”

Unity has several publications, including *Wee Wisdom*, for Children; *Good Business*, for business people; *Weekly Unity*, their devotional magazine; and the *Daily Word*, a daily devotional prepared along the same format as the well known and widely used conservative, orthodox devotional, *Our Daily Bread*. They are big on distributing much of this material for free to churches and prisons. They make extensive use of mail orders. Fillmore wrote at least two books, *Mysteries of Genesis* and *Christian Healing*. Following are quotes from *Christian Healing*

- ✍ "God is the name of my good" (p. 17).
- ✍ "God is the name of the everywhere Principle, in whom I live, move, and have my being" (p. 17).
- ✍ "I am the son of God, and the Spirit of the Most High dwells in me" (p. 29).
- ✍ "I am the only begotten son, dwelling in the bosom of the Father" (p. 29).
- ✍ "I am the Christ of God" (p. 29).
- ✍ "I and my Father are one" (p. 29).
- ✍ "I am one with Almightyness" (p. 29).
- ✍ "God is good, and God is all, therefore I refuse to believe in the reality of evil in any of its forms" (p. 60).
- ✍ "My perfection is now established in Divine Mind" (p. 83).
- ✍ "Holding continuously to the reality of things spiritual establishes them in mind -- they become mental substance" (p. 84).
- ✍ "I see the light of the Christ consciousness always" (p. 106).

The other major teaching of Unity is that of prosperity. Not only is the group in to healing of the physical, but also into the healing of the financial. In this we see the roots of the faith healing movement which got it major boost from the Pentecostal movement which developed just a few years later. Fillmore was a believer that no

one should be poor. In his book *Prosperity*, Fillmore perverts the wonderful 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm to set forth this philosophy:

The Lord is my banker, my credit is good.  
He maketh me to lie down in the consciousness of omnipresent abundance;  
He giveth me the key to His strongbox.  
He restoreth my faith in His riches;  
He guideth me in the paths of prosperity for His name's sake.  
Yea though I walk in the very shadow of debt,  
I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me:  
Thy silver and Thy gold, they secure me.  
Thou preparest a way for me in the presence of the collector;  
Thou fillest my wallet with plenty; my measure runneth over.  
Surely goodness and plenty will follow me all the days of my life;  
And I shall do business in the name of the Lord forever.<sup>81</sup>

So, Unity becomes a religion of happy thoughts and kind ideas, of tolerance and love. Unity makes God equal love, but Unity also makes love equal God. The first part of the formula is true, but the second part need not be.

The modern Unity is driven by its publishing arm and by Silent Unity. This group of believers is available twenty-four hours a day to respond in prayer, to counsel, to listen. Every request received by Unity is personally responded to with personal answers. This is a powerful recruitment tool. If only our churches could provide such a response.

## Interpretation Issues

Many of the cults are required to misrepresent the orthodox Christian beliefs in order to demonstrate the superiority of their own teachings. Unity is no exception. As shown above, Unity does not believe the Bible to be the absolute Word of God. Experience is more important. Unity does use Scripture when it suits their purpose, so their use is very selective. As an example, Unity claims that Christianity views God as a man because God made man in His image. If man is in the image of God, God must look like man! What Unity denies is the actual revelation of Who and What God is and what God has revealed to man about Himself, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and salvation.

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<sup>81</sup>McDowell, *Handbook of Today's Religion*, 135.

## Witnessing to a Unity Member

We have not considered the issue of witnessing to members of each and every cult, for while they are all different, many are the same. In the case of Unity, the ultimate goal will be to stress the personal nature of God. He is not an "It." This combined with the depravity of man and the reality of sin are the theological goals. This needs to be accomplished in a spirit of love and kindness. The need for redemption must be stressed to show the purpose of the Cross. If you can come to a true biblical definition of terms, the Unity member will be unable to address the sin issue without the Cross. This is the wedge which may fell the tree of Unity.

# Christadelphians

"Therefore, we conclude that it is not only that Jesus was called a sinner at his trial by his enemies or that he was "numbered with the transgressors" when he was crucified between two thieves, but more particularly that he shared the very nature which had made a sinner out of every other man who had borne it" (page 74).

"Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was first promised, and came into being only when he was born of the virgin Mary" (page 86).

from *The Christadelphians: What They Believe and Preach*, by Harry Tennant, The Christadelphian, 404 Shaftmoor Lane, Birmingham B28 8SZ, England, 1986.)

## History

The Christadelphians are the creation of one man, Dr. John Thomas. Although born in England, Thomas spent much of his life in the United States. In traveling to America, Dr. Thomas's ship encountered fierce storms. He "promised" God to devote his life to the study of religion if God would see him through the ordeal of the trip. Having survived, the good doctor commenced to study God's Word with a group called the Campbellites (Disciples of Christ). However, Thomas disagreed with many of the groups doctrines and soon left, taking some of the group with him.

Thomas became interested in prophecy and soon started publishing. In 1848, Thomas returned to England, and while there lecturing, published, "*Elpis Israel*" which means "*Hope of Israel*." This is the work which sets forth most of Thomas's doctrine. To this date, England maintains the largest number of Christadelphians.

Since Thomas and his group did not believe in participating in war, the out break of the American Civil War forced the group to formalize itself. This is the official start of the Christadelphians. The name was chosen for its Greek translation, "Brethren in Christ."

Thomas died in 1871, but his movement lives on.

As with all the cults, this group changes two of the essential doctrines. First, they deny the deity of Christ and they add works to salvation by grace. In particular, they find that Jesus is not God in the flesh, having a sin nature and not being eternal. They also deny the substitutionary value of Christ's death on the Cross. Further, they require that one be baptized to be saved. A more detailed listing of their doctrines will be found at the end of this chapter.

The problem with any cult is its appeal to the world. In this age of tolerance, consider the following description of Christadelphianism from the ReligiousTolerance.org WEB site:

The Christadelphians are a small Christian denomination. They might best be described as a conservative Christian movement which differs from conventional denominations in their beliefs concerning the nature of God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and Satan.

What else is there to differ on?

As with all cults, the group could not maintain its unity. In the 1880's a dispute erupted over the issue of resurrection. Two divisions emerged from this dispute, and while efforts were made in the 1970s to reunite the groups, such efforts were unsuccessful.

The *Unamended* group believe that only the deceased who are "*in Christ*" will be raised from the dead and have eternal life; the rest will simply remain dead, without conscious existence.

The *Amended* group believe that **all** who are **responsible (have been exposed to the Gospel)** will be raised from the dead at the time of the Final Judgment. Those who are not responsible will not be raised. The righteous will be judged according to their works, rewarded appropriately, and live forever. The wicked will be annihilated, and cease to exist. Neither group believes in a Hell where the unsaved will be tormented forever.

The split occurs entirely in North America, primarily the United States. In the rest of the world, Christadelphians follow the Amended belief system.

There are currently about 90 unamended and 80 amended congregations in the US. Worldwide, the two groups have some 850 congregations located in Africa, Australia, New Zealand, North America, South East Asia and throughout Europe.

## Practices

The group is less organized than might be expected and there is no formal governing structure such as with the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Christian Scientists. Most of the "coordination" occurs through the publishing houses and publications.

- ☐ Most meetings are in each other's homes or in rented halls. A few own their own buildings
- ☐ Their leaders are called lecturing brethren, managing brethren and presiding brethren. All are male volunteers who are elected to their posts.
- ☐ Women are given equal voting rights.
- ☐ Members do not vote, run for office or go to war.

## Beliefs of the Christadelphians, as taken from their literature

- ❑ Though they acknowledge many truths found in the Bible, they deny many others.
- ❑ They believe the Bible is the infallible and inerrant word of God. (*The Christadelphians: What They Believe and Preach*, p. 82)
- ❑ They teach there is only one God. (*Isaiah 43-45*)
- ❑ They teach that Jesus had a sin nature (*What They Believe*, p. 74)
- ❑ They teach that Jesus needed to save himself, before he could save us. (*Christadelphian Answers*, p. 24)
- ❑ They teach that Jesus will return and set up his kingdom on earth. (*What They Believe*, p. 268)
- ❑ They believe that there has been an apostasy and that Christianity is a false religious system. (*A tract titled "Christendom Astray Since the Apostolic Age, Detroit Christadelphian Book Supply*)
- ❑ They believe annihilation of the wicked. (*What They Believe*, p. 187).
- ❑ They believe that baptism is necessary for salvation. (*What They Believe*, p. 71,72, 207-210)
- ❑ They believe that it is possible to lose one's salvation. (*What They Believe*, p. 212)
- ❑ They deny the doctrine of the Trinity. (*What They Believe*, p. 84-87)
- ❑ They deny that Jesus is God in flesh. (*Answers*, p. 22)
- ❑ They deny that Jesus existed prior to his incarnation. (*What They Believe*, p. 85,86)
- ❑ They deny the personhood and deity of the Holy Spirit. (*What They Believe*, p. 115)
- ❑ They deny the substitutionary atonement of Christ. (*Answers*, p. 25; *What They Believe*, p. 71)
- ❑ They deny salvation by grace through faith alone. (*What they Believe*, p. 204)
- ❑ They deny immortality of the soul. (*What They Believe*, p. 17).
- ❑ They deny that a person exists after death. (*What They Believe*, p. 17)
- ❑ They deny the existence of hell and eternal punishment. (*What They Believe*, p. 188-189)
- ❑ They deny the existence of the fallen angel Lucifer as the devil. (*Answers*, p. 100)



# The Churches of Christ

## The Disciples of Christ Campbellites

*No creed but Christ*

It is not the purpose of this course to study Christian denominations, although at times we seem to be doing just that. This may be another of those trips.

We noted that Dr. John Thomas, the founder of the Christadelphians, came out of the Campbellites and it seems appropriate to take a quick look at this little known group. They are another of those groups which seem to adhere to the essential doctrines of Scripture, yet, float on the edges.

Thomas Campbell and his son, Alexander, were Presbyterian ministers from Ireland. They arrived in the eastern US in the early 1800s, bringing a message of unity to the Christian churches. Although apparently not intent on forming a new denomination, the pair developed a following, with many Christians forsaking local church ties to follow the Campbells. Although nicknamed “Campbellites,” the group preferred to be called Disciples of Christ.

At the same approximate time, another Presbyterian minister, Barton Stone, was teaching along the same lines. His followers formed an association of churches known as the “Christian Church.” In 1832 the two groups combined to form the “Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).”

Doctrinal differences, the Civil War, and divisions over the establishment of institutions (i.e., mission boards) split the denomination. One group called itself the Disciples of Christ, the other the Churches of Christ. The Churches of Christ split further over the issue of whether only one communion cup should be used during the Lord’s Supper. The Disciples of Christ became more liberal over the years and split further. The new group became known as the “Christian Churches and Churches of Christ” or as the North American Christian Convention. Interestingly enough, all of the groups use the names almost indiscriminately and one of the major differences is whether instrumental music should be used in the worship service. Yet, all three

main groups have individual churches on both sides of the music issue. The Churches of Christ, however, generally reject the use of instruments in worship.

## **Baptism**

From a doctrinal / cult point of view, the major issue is baptism. Both the Churches of Christ and the NACC consider baptism as necessary for salvation.

The Campbells believed that Christians should avoid the use of the creeds (Nicene, Apostles, etc). Further, while they taught an orthodox view of deity of Christ and the existence of the Trinity, they avoided all Trinitarian language. Stone, however, clearly rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. Surprisingly, while the issue of baptism as part of salvation remains, the churches of the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ generally accept the doctrine of the Trinity.

Other doctrinal issues involve a rejection of the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and eternal salvation. The Churches of Christ view the doctrine of eternal security as a license to sin. The churches are generally amillennial, spiritualizing the reign of Christ on earth.

The major fault is the teaching that salvation is by faith in Christ and baptism by immersion.

## **Satan at Work**

In concept, this entire group of churches approaches worship by rejecting every theological system and practice not found explicitly in the Bible. The motto of the collective group is, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." However, in practice, they are not silent. Where the Scriptures are silent, they speak against a practice, such as instruments in worship.

What was a basically doctrinally correct movement of the Campbells apparently was so weak in their beliefs that they accepted Barton Stone into the group, even when Stone denied the Trinity. This opened the door for more errors in doctrine and as the groups split and re-split and reformed, Satan was able to corrupt the doctrines of the church. Today, a major portion of the group has an incorrect view of the place of baptism, resulting in the teaching of an incorrect method of salvation.

Here, then, is a group essentially correct in all but one major, essential doctrine. The non-essential doctrinal issues are not important to eternal life. But, when error seeps

into the foundation, eternal problems arise. And, from the early years of this group, the seeds of a more drastic cult - the Christadelphians - were formed.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the Churches of Christ, see the article on this group at the Christian Research Institute WEB site, <http://www.equip.org/free/DC600.htm>

# Faith Healing

## Word Faith

Did you ever stop to think about having faith in your own faith? Evidently God had faith in His faith, because He spoke words of faith and they came to pass. ... *Having faith in your words is having faith in your faith.* That's what you've got to learn to do to get things from God: *Have faith in your faith.*<sup>83</sup>

Kenneth Copeland

The whole point is I'm trying to get you to see—to get you out of this malaise of thinking that Jesus and His disciples were poor and then relating that to you. ... The Bible says that He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. That's the reason why I drive a Rolls Royce.<sup>84</sup>

Frederick K.C. Price

But consider,

*The test of anything calling itself Christian is not its significance or its success or its power, though these make the test more imperative. The test is truth.*<sup>85</sup>

As we stated in the last chapter, this is a course on cults, not on denominations. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Pentecostal movement was born. The “father” is generally considered to be Charles Fox Parham of Kansas. At the turn of the century Parham founded a short lived school. His students learned to study by topics and never considered verses in their context. After studying holiness, the students

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<sup>83</sup>Walter Martin, Hank Hanegraaff, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa., Appendix B.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978, 1992, 20, quoting from Frederick Dale Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970, 33.

decreed a date to revive the “baptism” of the Holy Spirit with its manifest gifts as on Pentecost. The Pentecostal movement was off and running.

While we do not agree with some of their practices, such as speaking in tongues, the basic tenets of the Pentecostal movement are the essential doctrines of Christianity.

I have become both weary and wary of those who use the perversions of the Faith movement to drive a wedge between charismatic and noncharismatic Christians. Frankly this is both counterproductive and divisive, for the Faith movement is not charismatic; it is cultic.<sup>86</sup>

Hank Hanegraaff

In the last forty years or so, the charismatic movement has been born. The distinction here is that charismatics are not a denomination. Rather, they are believers within denominations, often mainline<sup>87</sup> ones, who have accepted the application of the “sign” gifts of the Pentecostals.<sup>88</sup> The “father” of the charismatic movement is usually considered to be Dennis Bennett, an Episcopalian.

For our purposes, more important than the acceptance of the sign gifts, the movement adopted the measuring stick of the Pentecostals, the experience of the signs. The Bible is given second place in the measuring of truth.<sup>89</sup>

## Faith Healers

Within the boundaries of these groups, comes another group, one which is Christian, and, yet, is not. This is the group of the faith healers, currently referred to as the Word Faith movement.<sup>90</sup> This movement involves names such as Kenneth Hagin,

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<sup>86</sup>Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993, 47.

<sup>87</sup>For our purposes, “mainline” means the traditional, major denominations, such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and so on.

<sup>88</sup>“Sign” gifts are the gifts of speaking and interpreting tongues, prophecy as fore-telling, healing, and similar miracles given as signs to authenticate the messenger.

<sup>89</sup>Depending upon one’s view point, there is a third segment of the Pentecost evolution. C. Peter Wagner, a professor of church growth at Fuller Theological Seminary (California) sees three great movements of the Holy Spirit. The first was at the turn of the century with the founding of the Pentecostals. The second was the movement of Pentecostal ideas into other denominations, the charismatics. Then in the 1980s, came the “Third Wave.” All of these groups measure their faith on the experiences of healing. Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit*, Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, Servant Publications, 1988. Oddly enough, this timing coincides with the growth of television evangelism and the growth of the faith healers.

<sup>90</sup>Although this title is fairly recent, we will adopt this title throughout to refer to this class of teachers.

Kenneth Hagin, Jr., Kenneth Copeland, Frederick K. C. Price, David (Paul) Yonggi Cho, pastor of one of the largest churches in the world in Seoul, Korea, Gloria Copeland, Robert Tilton, John Avanzini, John Osteen, T. L. Osborne, Marilyn Hickey, Jerry Savelle, Morris Cerullo, Casey Treat, Dwight Thompson, and Oral and Richard Roberts. The list of unknown faith healers seems endless. The Word Faith movement is, to a great extent, a creature of the media industry. This involves both radio and television, as well as a vast publishing arm. In particular is the support given to the Word Faith movement by the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

One critic calls the Word Faith gospel “the most subtle heretical system to emerge in our own times.”<sup>91</sup> Using evangelical / Pentecostal terms, mixed with an abundance of biblical “proof texts,” the Word Faith movement presents the appearance of a valid Christianity, lulling its followers into a false sense of security over its teachings.

But, upon review, the theology of this group appears to be a mix of gnosticism and transcendentalism. This makes the group, at least, a cousin to Christian Science, New Thought, and Unity. What is particularly frightening about this movement is that there are many fine, born again believers within its ranks. This segment appears to have missed or failed to internalize the actual teachings being presented to them. The “name it and claim it” approach either appeals to their lusts, or they are not mature enough in their Christianity to recognize the lack of biblical support.

True Christians within the faith movement have failed to learn what it is they should believe!

## Faith in Faith

The initial fault of this movement is that their faith lies in their faith. By placing full weight upon the power of faith, the movement will make man as powerful as God. Man will become a “little god.” Again as quoted in *Kingdom of the Cults*:

Word Faith celebrity Kenneth Copeland says, “What you are saying is exactly what you are getting now. If you are living in poverty and lack and want, change what you are saying. ... The powerful force of the spiritual world that creates the circumstances around us is controlled by the words of the mouth.” Kenneth E. Hagin, who served for many years as Copeland’s mentor, echoes his protégée: “Your right

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<sup>91</sup>Judith A. Matt, *The Born-Again Jesus of the Word-Faith Teaching* (Fullerton, Calif.: Spirit of Truth Ministries, 1984), 8.

confession will become a reality, and then you will get whatever you need from God.”<sup>92</sup>

Notice that Hagin says when you speak, God must act!

As a simple example, the movement would teach that if you need money, just take out your wallet and pray over it. If you have faith, the wallet will be filled! Or, do you need healed? Just pray – or let one of “us” pray for you! Healing will follow. Speak to your circumstances in faith and all will be well!

According to the “Faith” teachers, God automatically responds and accomplishes what we command when we positively confess our needs and desires in faith.<sup>93</sup>

John Ankerberg/John Weldon

While it is important not to downplay the power of God, the Bible does not teach that man can do anything outside of the will of God. The Word Faith movement makes the will of God equal to the wants of man. And, if you do not get what you asked for, well, your faith was just not strong enough or was improperly focused. “As Frederick K. C. Price says, ‘If you keep talking death, that is what you are going to have. If you keep talking sickness and disease, that is what you are going to have, because you are going to create the reality of them with your own mouth. That is a divine law.’”<sup>94</sup>

## Experience versus the Bible

The results of the faith are measured by experience. They are subjective. This is the path followed by both the Roman Catholics and the Pentecostal movements. Adverse to this is the objective, historic theology of the Reformation followers. Over time, both subjective and objective truths cannot be true.

By using experiences, this group is claiming the Word of God is not closed! Consider the comments of John F. MacArthur, Jr.:

The truth, however is that there is no way to “protect the distinctiveness of the Bible” if God is inspiring new revelation today.

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<sup>92</sup>Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, STEP electronic addition, Appendix B. Hagin frequently is called the “father” of the Word Faith movement, but Martin alleges that Hagin plagiarized much of his material from his mentor, E.W. Kenyon. Anker calls Kenyon the founder of the movement. See footnote 11 below, page 35.

<sup>93</sup>John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on The Faith Movement*, The Anker Series, Eugene, Or: Harvest House Publishers, 1993, 6.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

If the canon is still open, and if God is still giving new prophecies, new songs, and new words of wisdom, we should be earnestly seeking to compile and study these most recent revelations along with Scripture – and maybe even more diligently, since they speak expressly to our time and culture.<sup>95</sup>

Unfortunately, under this approach, suffering and the evil events in one's life are not the result of sin and Satan, or even God's testing. Rather, these events result from "simply" a lack of faith. Health, happiness, prosperity, and success become the standards of the movement. These define God's will for the individual, if the individual shall only act upon them. Man becomes the source of all suffering. The tongue is the instrument of one's destruction, because it is used in a lack of faith. To quote Copeland, "God did not allow the Devil to get on Job. Job allowed the Devil to get on Job."<sup>96</sup>

## Be Well

Using Isaiah 53:4-6<sup>97</sup> (out of context), the Word Faith movement adopts the attitude that it is the will of God that no one be sick – ever! Again, to quote Copeland: "God intends for every believer to live completely free from sickness and disease."<sup>98</sup> Personal lack of faith becomes the basis for suffering. In this case, lack of faith is presented as the reason for sickness. To quote Jerry Savelle: "When symptoms come, it is nothing more than the thief trying to steal the health which is already ours. In other words, divine health is not something we are trying to get from God; it is something the Devil is trying to take away from us! ... When the Devil tries to put a symptom of sickness or disease in my body, I absolutely refuse to accept it."<sup>99</sup>

The sad thing about such teachings are the tragedies which arise from following the faith concept. For example, consider the story of Larry and Lucy Parker and their son, Wesley. Believing the faith teachings of this movement, the Parkers withheld insulin from Wesley, preferring to confess and pray his illness away. On August 23,

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<sup>95</sup>John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Charismatic Chaos*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992, 63.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>**Isaiah 53:4-6:** *4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

<sup>98</sup>Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, STEP electronic addition, Appendix B.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.



1973, Wesley died of insulin shock and his parents were convicted of manslaughter.<sup>100</sup>

True, there are some healings. Consider Gerstner's observation:

What is the conclusion of the matter? Two facts seem clear: There are some exceptional, perhaps inexplicable, cures; but these are few in comparison with the initial or subsequent failures. The "cures" are dramatized and conspicuous. The noncures are not dramatized. But they are far more numerous. This fact is to be noticed for what it is worth.<sup>101</sup>

As has been implied, the real question in all of this healing is, what is God's relationship to these miracles?

While there may be miraculous healings brought about by God, there are no miracles. First, the Bible always links miracles and revelation. The miracles authenticate the messenger. But the New Testament, in general, and Hebrews 1:1-4<sup>102</sup> in particular, make it clear that the revelation of God ended in Jesus Christ. Once His story and teachings were made clear in the pages of Scripture, there was no further need for revelation.

Secondly, once past the New Testament Apostles, the great Christians of history – Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Edwards, Moody, Graham - have never done or claimed to have performed miracles. Third, miracle workers have been the source of evil. The arguments for miracles always seem to bring out the extremists in history. Fourth, as noted above, a vast amount of damage is done to people because of the "failure" of miracles. Frequently, this damage is spiritually fatal.

And, as noted above, the theological basis of almost all the sensational events are contrary to the Word of God. At the extreme example, if faith healing is successful,

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid., drawing from Larry Parker, *We Let Our Son Die* (Irvine, Calif.: Harvest House Publishers, 1980). This section of Martin's provides other examples as well.

<sup>101</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1960, 111.

<sup>102</sup>**Hebrews 1:1-4:** *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

why do the saints die? And why is there this vast implication of the greater faithlessness of the unhealed compared to the healed? How does one account for the evangelistic success of a David Ring<sup>103</sup> under these conditions? Consider the following comparison:

<b>Biblical Miracles</b>	<b>Modern Wonders</b>
Always successful	Usually unsuccessful
No know relapses	Admitted relapses
Always immediate	Usually not immediate, often gradual
The dead are raised	Dead are not raised
All varieties of disease	Usually functional disease
Usually played down	Usually played up
Included power over non-human nature	No power over non-human nature
Credentials of messengers of Christian Revelation	Not credentials of messengers of Revelation
No noticeable dependence on psychological build-up	Conspicuous dependence on psychological build-up <sup>104</sup>

#### **Romans 10:17**

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

The practice of “decreeing” things into existence can be seen in some occult and Eastern groups such as The Church Universal and Triumphant, and Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism.<sup>105</sup>

Christianity and the faith of the believer rests upon historical objective revelation. That revelation is recorded in the Bible. Scripture is the test of everything – the standard.

#### **Jude 3**

*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you **exhorting you***

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<sup>103</sup>Ring is a wonderful evangelist who has cerebral palsy. His speech is difficult to understand and by man’s standards he should not be a public speaker. But, if God’s Spirit is with you as you listen, Ring is a magnificent speaker and a great inspiration.

<sup>104</sup>Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, 117

<sup>105</sup>Ankerberg, *The Facts on The Faith Movement*, 35.

***to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.***

The Greek word translated “once” means “once for all!” It is finished! God has provided all of the revelation He is going to give us. The Holy Spirit will illuminate our hearts using the truth of Scripture, speaking to us in our circumstances. But, there is no new Scripture.

Although charismatics deny that they are trying to add to Scripture, their views on prophetic utterance, gifts of prophecy, and revelation really do just that. As they add – however unwittingly – to God’s final revelation, they undermine the uniqueness and authority of the Bible. New revelation, dreams, and visions are considered as binding on the believer’s conscience as the book of Romans or the Gospel of John.<sup>106</sup>

In the second century, a heretic named Montanus, together with his followers claimed to receive revelation from God. This revelation supplemented and expanded the Word communicated by Christ and the Scriptures.

They believed the Holy Spirit spoke through the mouths of Montanus and the two prophetesses. Montanus believed he was living in the last days immediately before the return of Christ. . . . The contemporary charismatic movement is in many ways the spiritual heir of Montanism. In fact, it would not at all be unfair to call today’s charismatic movement neo-Montanism.<sup>107</sup>

How many of the beliefs of the other cults have you found in these teachings? The metaphysical teachings of Christian Science and Unity are apparent in the Word Faith movement, added to the Montanism.

## Concerns of Word Faith

Ankerberg presents the following list as problems with Word Faith.<sup>108</sup>

- ✍ Cultic Origins or Influences – New Thought and the Mind Sciences
- ✍ Oversimplification – quick and easy solutions to complex human problems
- ✍ Abuse of the Bible
- ✍ False Teachings
- ✍ Spiritual Pride
- ✍ Spiritual Presumptions – the claim of direct divine revelation

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<sup>106</sup>MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos*, 75.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>108</sup>Ankerberg, *The Facts on the Faith Movement*, 15.

- ✍ Worldly/Humanistic Theology – success, health, happiness, prosperity, power
- ✍ Experimentalism – feelings and emotions in place of the mind and intellect
- ✍ Hedonism – emphasis on pleasure and “heaven now”
- ✍ Exclusivism – the rest of us are carnally minded
- ✍ Power Religion – the ability to command angels - and God!
- ✍ Lack of Balance – the stress on the “faith” forgets the way a Christian should live
- ✍ Lack of Spiritual Integrity – denial of the minister’s divine call by failing to rightly divide the Word of Truth

## The Teachings of the Word Faith Movement<sup>109</sup>

1. God is a being who stands approximately six feet tall, weighs some two hundred pounds, and looks exactly like a man.<sup>B-13</sup>

2. Faith is the literal substance “that God used to create the universe, and He transported that faith with His words.”<sup>B-14</sup> “Here, essentially, is what God did. God filled His words with faith. He used His words as containers to hold His faith and contain that spiritual force and transport it out there into the vast darkness by saying, ‘Light, be!’ That’s the way God transported His faith causing creation and transformation.”<sup>B-15</sup> “The way that He created the world was that, first of all, he conceived something on the inside of Him. He conceived, He had an image, He had a picture.”<sup>B-16</sup>

3. All things, including God, are subject to this “force of faith” because it works according to spiritual “laws” of the universe. “There are laws of the world of the spirit. ... The spiritual world and its laws are more powerful than the physical world. ... The world and the physical forces governing it were created by the power of faith—a spiritual force. ... It is this force of faith which makes the laws of the spirit world function.”<sup>B-17</sup> “The force of faith is released by words. Faith-filled words put the law of the Spirit of life into operation.”<sup>B-18</sup>

4. The greatest thing God conceived of and created was an exact duplicate of himself. This duplicate god—named Adam—was God manifested in the flesh.<sup>B-19</sup>

5. God eventually went to Adam, who was anatomically male and female, and separated the female part from the male part to make a “womb-man” (woman). Adam named this “man with a womb” Eve. She, like Adam, was a god.<sup>B-20</sup>

6. The Fall caused Adam and Eve’s divine natures to be replaced with Satan’s nature. They also lost their rights of rulership to planet earth. Even God was barred from having full access to earth because Adam and Eve were under His lordship when they “fell.” Through their disobedience Satan became the god of this world.

7. God formulated a scheme to take back the earth, but in order to execute His plan He had to find a human who would invite Him (give Him permission) to work within the earthly realm. Finally, God “got to a point where He had His plan ready for operation. And He saw a man named Abraham.”<sup>B-21</sup> In return for *allowing* God to bring the Messiah through his lineage, Abraham received unlimited health and wealth.

8. For centuries God visualized Jesus. Then, when it was finally time for the Messiah to come forth, God spoke him into existence through faith in the same way that He had visualized and spoken into existence everything else. Bringing forth Jesus, however, was also dependent upon whether or not Mary would lend *her* faith to help form the body of the Lord out of the literal “Word” (confession) God spoke to her: “Mary received the Word of God. *She actually conceived God’s Word sent by an*

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<sup>109</sup>Taken from Marin, Ibid. Most of this material has been drawn from Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*. The subscript notations “B-xx” represent the placement of electronic footnotes in the STEP edition of *Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)* referencing the sources used by Hanegraaff to produce the quotes or examples.

angel. Zacharias didn't. ... Mary received it. She spoke it when she conceived it in her spirit. Then it manifested itself in her physical body. ... This is the key to understanding the Virgin Birth. ... God spoke it. God transmitted that image to Mary. She received the image inside her. ... The embryo that was in Mary's womb was nothing more than the Word of God. ... Mary conceived the Word in her spirit. It manifested itself in her physical body."<sup>B-22</sup> "Mary conceived the Word of God in her heart. ... Mary conceived the Word sent to her by the angel (God's Word) and conceived it in the womb of her spirit. Once it was conceived in her spirit, it manifested itself in her physical body. *She received and conceived the Word of God in her spirit.* ... The embryo in Mary's womb was nothing but the pure Word of God—and it took flesh upon itself."<sup>B-23</sup> "The angels spoke the words of the covenant to her [Mary]. She pondered them in her heart, and those words became the seed. And the Spirit of God hovered over her and generated that seed, which was the Word that the angel spoke to her. And there was conceived in her, the Bible says, a holy thing. The Word literally became flesh."<sup>B-24</sup>

9. While on earth Jesus was wealthy. He lived in a big house, had a great deal of money, and wore the finest clothes.<sup>B-25</sup>

10. Although Jesus declared that he walked with God and that God was in Him, he never actually claimed to be God.<sup>B-26</sup> In fact, during his three years of public ministry "Jesus did not stand in a class by himself. ... *He was ministering on earth as a human being*—a prophet anointed with the Holy Spirit."<sup>B-27</sup> Jesus remained sinless so He could redeem men from their satanic natures.

11. In order to redeem humanity, Jesus had to die spiritually as well as physically. When He died spiritually, he died in the same way that Adam died. In other words, He lost His divine nature and was given the nature of Satan. Jesus' death on the cross and His shed blood did not atone for our sins.<sup>B-28</sup> The atonement took place in hell through the devil's torturing of Jesus' spirit for three days and three nights. Unfortunately for Satan, Jesus was taken to hell "illegally" because He had never sinned. This "technicality" enabled God to use His "force of faith" to revive Jesus' spirit, restore Jesus' divine nature, and resurrect Jesus' body. Through the resurrection process Jesus was "born again."

12. When a person is born again they experience *exactly* what happened to Jesus. Their satanic nature is replaced by God's divine nature. The transformation is so identical to Jesus' transformation that Christians become little gods (small "g") and are as much an incarnation of God as was Jesus.

13. Because Christians are "little gods," they now have access to the "God-kind of faith," which can be used to get virtually anything they want. Christians, rather than God, have authority in the earth over Satan and sickness and disease. Consequently, believers should never pray *God's* will be done.<sup>B-29</sup>

14. To obtain specific desires, Christians must do three things: (1) loose the power of the "force of faith" by speaking or positively confessing whatever is wanted (e.g., "I am healed," "I am not sick," etc.); (2) *believe* that whatever has been confessed will definitely be received; and (3) ignore or look beyond the visible reality (i.e., remaining sickness, low finances, etc.) and continue claiming what has been confessed.

15. Everything bad, including poverty and sickness, comes from Satan. God's people should have a completely blessed life. A Christian not experiencing such a life is either: (1) in sin; or (2) lacking enough faith to bring about what is desired.

16. The power of audible confession is so great that sometimes a person can unknowingly bring tragedy upon themselves by making *negative* confessions. For example, a woman who is mugged may have actually caused that mugging if at any time prior to the experience she made comments like, "I live in such a dangerous part of the city that I'm afraid I'll be mugged." The woman should have been saying, "I will not be mugged." Similarly, someone who jokingly says "I feel like I'm going crazy" may actually become insane.

## Roman Catholics

...the Church, to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, 'does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence'.<sup>110</sup>

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*  
paragraph 82<sup>111</sup>

The Catholic Church is the one true Church established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of all mankind.

Rev. John A. O'Brien  
*The Faith of Millions*, 46<sup>112</sup>

The twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent decrees that the images of Christ and the Virgin Mary, and of the other saints, are especially to be had and retained in the churches, and that honor and veneration are to be paid to them.

Archdeacon Sinclair  
*Image Worship*<sup>113</sup>

Long, long ago, in a time which in many respects is not very far away, there were no Protestants or Catholics. There was merely, in the language of the Apostles' Creed, the "catholic church." In this usage, the true meaning of the word catholic is "universal." The point of the Creed is that there was one, worldwide body of Christ, "the church."

How then did we arrive at a point where, at times, various theologians have called the Pope the anti-Christ? Is the Roman Catholic Church Christian? Or a cult?

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<sup>110</sup><http://www.carm.org/rc/intro.htm>

<sup>111</sup>All "paragraph" reference citations in this chapter will be from this *Catechism*.

<sup>112</sup>John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on Roman Catholicism*, Eugene, Or: Harvest House Publishers, 1993, 4.

<sup>113</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Trust Depot, 1917, 140.



## History

Jesus died in the time frame of A.D. 30-33, depending upon your preference of dating events. James, the brother of the Lord, wrote his epistle, the biblical book of James, in about A.D. 45. This is most, likely, the first book of the New Testament to be written. This letter does not evidence the existence of false teachers, but it does show evidence of man's views over God's views, a preferring of money and position over spiritual matters (2:1-13; 5:1-6).

Paul's letter to the Galatians comes in A.D. 49 and is a defense against false teachers. In Galatia, the issue was legalism, the adding of works to the message of salvation, in this case compliance with the rituals of Judaism. This is the first New Testament letter of Paul's to be written. All of the other letters also fight the influence of false teachers.

John is the last of the Apostles to die. His letters reflect the same conflict with false teaches as does Paul's. John's death around A.D. 98-100 ends an era. The second century ushers in the age of the church fathers. This is a unique time period. The letters and books of the New Testament are gathered and the New Testament is "created." In the process, teachers with doctrines which may sound a "little different" arrive on the scene. The orthodox leaders of the church must define their terms and doctrine. This is the beginning of systematic theology, the gathering together of all the biblical passages on a given topic so that an actual statement of meaning may be created. Over the third, fourth, and fifth centuries this process would evolve and mature. The famous creeds of Christendom will come from these efforts – the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed being the most well known.

The Creeds are really nothing more than the statements of faith of a young, maturing church, issued in response to what the church called "heresy." Initially, at least, the false doctrines were heresy because the teachers promoting the new doctrines were leaders of local churches. They would be excommunicated in most cases and form their own groups – cults!

Other events, more political in nature would also direct the life of Christianity. In the midst of the debates over theological meaning, Constantine (A.D. 274-337) became emperor of Rome (A.D. 312). In a battle with the Viscounts, Constantine had a vision of a Cross in the night sky which carried the message "in this sign conquer." Taking this as an omen, Constantine arose, had the Cross painted on his shields and went off to battle. He decisively won. He attributed the victory to Christ and made Christianity the religion of the empire. State and the church of Christ were united.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Some historians, including good Christian scholars, speculate that political expediency influenced Constantine more than the vision. In either case, the results are the same.

This union had two main results. First, the church enjoyed a long period of peace from persecution. Much of its life in the Roman Empire witnessed periods of hiding from the emperors rather than siding with them. Second, everyone “became” Christian. The emphasis on individual salvation by grace was lost.

A third, unforeseen, result of Constantine’s effort arose from the expansion of the empire. As Constantine moved east, he fell in love with Turkey and built Constantinople. The emperor moved his headquarters there, making the east the seat of power, detracting from the power of the ancient capital of Rome. As time passes, the conflict between the bishops of Rome and Constantinople will lead to a fracture within the structure of the church.

## **Councils, Creeds, and Popes**

Along the way, the pattern of church decision making for the next thousand years arose with the use of councils. The council finds its biblical basis in Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council. In Acts, the church, under the leadership of James, the brother of the Lord, met with the Apostles, other key church members, Paul and Barnabas, and those advocating the need for circumcision (Judaizers). That council ruled that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised to become a Christian. This was a key decision point in the history of the early church.

The church of Constantine faced the heresy of the God-ship of Jesus. Arius promoted that God the Father and Jesus the Son were separate, distinct Persons. In other words, in our terms, the battle was over the Trinity. Constantine called a church council which met in Nicaea, a city just outside of Constantinople. In A.D.325, the Council of Nicaea adopted what has become known as the Nicene Creed, a creed which sets forth the nature of the Godhead, the Trinity. This is a key development in the growth of pure Christian doctrine. The Creed is set forth on the next page.

Many councils would follow this one. The First Council of Constantinople in A.D. 381 would resolve another difficulty with the relationship of the Godhead, namely, whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from just the Father, or both the Father and the Son. For the early church, Creeds, or variations thereto, became the solution to early church issues.

### **The Nicene Creed**

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven. And He became flesh by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man. He was also crucified for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried. And on the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. And of His kingdom there will be no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, and who spoke through the prophets, and one holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. And I await the resurrection of the dead. And the life of the world to come. Amen.

The fracture between East and West arises, in part, from the need of Rome to maintain power in Europe. While not the first to call himself Pope, Leo the Great (A.D. 451) is important for both spiritual and religious matters. Recognizing the weakness of European governments, Leo takes it upon himself to negotiate with Attila the Hun. As a result, Rome is spared and the popes join the political forces of society. Where Constantine linked state to church, Leo the Great reversed the roles, uniting church to state.

At the same time, Leo called a Council at Chalcedon to consider the brewing controversy over the nature of Christ – was He part God, part man? Did he have two natures? Did the God nature over power the man nature? This Council resolved the issue with the doctrinal position that Jesus was perfect God and perfect man in a union (“hypostatic union” or “hypostatsis”), another of those unexplainable characteristics of God.

Other important church events involving the Pope occur including:

- ◀ Pope Gregory (540-606) standardizes worship and the liturgy of the church
- ◀ The conquests of Charles the Great (Charlemagne) expands the reach of Christianity (c. 800)

- ◄ Charlemagne's successor, Pepin (714-768), gave to Pope Stephen II a grant of land which became the papal states. This property in and around Rome was held by the popes free and clear of state interference from 756-1870.
- ◄ Pope Gregory VII foresees the nature of the future spread of Christianity in Britain as he does head-to-head battle with Henry IV over Henry's rights as king to divorce (1073)
- ◄ Pope Urban II commences the crusades, a series of campaigns to free the Holy Lands from the hands of the Islamic Muslims (1095). The crusades will occur off and on over a period of a couple of hundred years and most will end in disaster.
- ◄ In 1305, a Frenchman, Clement V becomes Pope, but due to political pressures, remains in France rather than moving to Rome. The period becomes known as the "Babylonian captivity" of the Pope.
- ◄ The Great Schism commences in 1377 with the appointment of Urban VI as Pope. Most clergy almost immediately regret this choice and attempt to remove Urban, replacing him with Clement VII. Urban does not step aside and for 39 years there are two popes. A new council meets and elects Alexander V as Pope in 1407. However, neither Urban or Clement step aside and now there are three popes! Finally, in 1414, following intense negotiations, Martin V becomes the head of the church at Rome and the other three step aside.
- ◄ In 1870, the Italian armies took Rome and the pope lost all of his temporal possessions except the Vatican buildings. The pope would not accept a settlement with the new Italian government and went into a self-imposed exile within the Vatican until a treaty with Mussolini in 1929.

Please remember that although these leaders are called "popes," until the Reformation, this is not what we now call the Roman Catholic Church. This is the Church of Christ, the growth of the church in Jerusalem formed by the original converts under the leadership of the Apostles. There is but one church, with many "main centers." There was no single leadership entity. Major churches arose early in Rome, in Antioch, in Ephesus, in Alexandria, Egypt, in Constantinople. Our knowledge of early events and controversies come from the writings of the leaders of these early centers. Men such as Clement of Rome, Papias, Polycarp, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Origen, and Augustine (the church "fathers") give us the theology and problems of the early church.

At the same time, a power struggle was likely to ensue. Controversy arose over Constantine moving the capital of the Roman Empire to Asia. Constantinople became a major center for the church simply because of the presence of the Emperor. At the same time, Europe grew weak politically where church leaders like Leo the Great stepped into the power void. The struggle between Rome and Constantinople developed over time as the power struggle of church leadership.

It all comes to a head in 1054, but other events and differences arose between the two religious centers prior to the final schism. Early on, Rome and Constantinople fought over the dating of Easter.<sup>115</sup> While this difference was laid aside, it should be noted that most of the controversies leading to the various councils arose in the East. Further, there were differences between the two centers over whether priests could marry, on the necessity of the priest to have a beard, over the matter of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son, and on the place of icons (not only crosses, but figures of saints) in the churches. In 1054, the church at Constantinople started a new debate over the fact that the church at Rome used unleavened bread for the Eucharist (Lord's Supper). This matter, while it may seem trivial to us, led to the final split of the two ecclesiastical centers. The two "popes" excommunicated each other. The Greek Orthodox Church was born. The church at Rome plodded on believing it was the true Church of Christ.

## Intellectualism

The entire period between somewhere around 500 and as late as about 1200 is known as the dark or middle ages. The power of the clergy builds. The laity are taught they have no access to God except through the clergy. The economic and social conditions of the people are generally poor. There are only the rulers/rich and the poor. Theology generally sits still during this time period. Monasteries and the Orders of the Nuns are formed to preserve the Scriptures and to study God. The Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Jesuits are created.

A turning point was the development of what is now called "scholasticism." This is the movement of theology to scholarly study at "universities" from the councils and "on the street." While much good comes from this period to offset events such as the crusades, bad develops as well. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) writes his thesis, *Summa Theologica*. This becomes the theology of the Dominican Order of the church and will be revived in 1879 by the Roman Catholic Church to become the systematic theology of that Church.

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<sup>115</sup>Easter Sunday falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after March 20, the nominal date of the Spring Equinox, although some hold that the actual date of the Equinox or March 21 should be used. The year-to-year sequence is so complicated that it takes 5.7 million years to repeat. The second century controversy between East and West was over whether or not Easter should always be on a Sunday. The Eastern Orthodox churches celebrated Easter on Passover, the fourteenth day of Nisan, regardless of the day of the week. The West celebrated Easter on the Sunday following Passover. The West prevailed in the united church at the Council of Nicaea (325). Changes to the calendar have made the Western church use the Equinox dating system which moves Easter away from Passover as the actual date reference. After the split, the Greek (Eastern) Orthodox Church returns to using Passover. Accordingly, Eastern Orthodox and the rest of Christianity may celebrate Easter as much as a month apart.

As a result of many events, including the need to replenish the money chests depleted by the Crusades, the church starts selling “indulgences.” Effectively, an indulgence is a pre-sold penance or forgiveness of sin. Feel like going out and fooling around tonight? Buy your forgiveness in advance! Not biblical, but it fits with the developing power of the church in Rome. Through the past 600-800 years leading to this event, the professional clergy has developed and is intent upon protecting itself. This is merely one of those steps.

Things continue to go downhill. Then, Martin Luther, a priest, posts his famous ninety-five theses for debate on the door of the Castle church in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. The Reformation had commenced and the Church of Christ is about to take on a new look. All the Reformers maintained three uniform principles:

- ☐ The sole authority of Scripture
- ☐ That Salvation was the result of grace through faith
- ☐ That all believers could go to God without the intervention of a priest

## Responses and Problems

What the Reformers soon discovered was that beyond these basic tenets and the orthodox statements of the creeds, the Reformers could not agree amongst themselves. Perhaps, the greatest debates involved the same issues as those with the church in Rome. Issues such as the meaning of the Last Supper, the place and purpose of Baptism, and the issue of free will, drive wedges into the various groups of Reformers. Just as the Church of Christ had split between the power centers of Rome and Constantinople, so, now, the Reformers each went their own way and what we call denominations were born.

And, all the while, the church at Rome plodded on.

## Tradition

Tradition becomes the source of doctrine which may not be expressly discovered in Scripture. Has the Roman Catholic Church become like the Pharisees of biblical Judaism? Have the church's tradition gotten in the way of God's teachings, producing bad doctrine and practice? To the Catholic Church, tradition appears to justify their methods and views of the Mass, Penance, Veneration of Mary, Purgatory, Indulgences, the Priesthood, the Confessional, the Rosary, Venial and Mortal Sins, and statues in the Church.

"Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God."(paragraph 97).

The reasoning goes like this:

1. "The apostles left bishops as their successors. They gave them 'their own position of teaching authority.'" (Paragraph 77)
2. "This living transmission, accomplished through the Holy Spirit, is called tradition." (Par. 78)
3. "Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence." (Par. 82).

The Roman Catholic Church has elevated Tradition to the level of God's revealed Word. Tradition justifies the teachings of the church. This, to a great extent, is the same tradition which led to the Reformation. The church itself refers to the "living Tradition of the whole Church." It is the basis for interpreting Scripture.

Tradition has become the source of many new, "revealed" doctrines, including the veneration of Mary, the apocrypha, transubstantiation, praying to saints, the confessional, penance, and purgatory.

Is there a difference between the Roman Catholic Church and the Pharisees? Tradition must be interpreted in light of the Scripture, not the other way around. Does not the history of the Roman Church show just the opposite? The Church uses tradition to interpret and apply Scripture. To this extent, the teachings of the Church are unbiblical and the doctrines which arise from these Traditions are false doctrines.

"Sola Scriptura," or, "Scripture Alone" was the battle cry of Luther and others during the Reformation. Catholics hold fast to tradition, asking the question, "Is Sola Scriptura biblical?"

It is true that major doctrines accepted by all Christians do not find direct, supportive statements in the Bible. These include the Trinity, the two natures of Jesus (God and man), and the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Godhead. Yet, all of these doctrines, developed over many years in response to false teachings, are supported by Scripture and do not contradict Scripture. Compare this to Catholic doctrines, such as the praying to Mary as an intercessor. Scripture teaches that only God deserves worship (Matt 4:10). Is not prayer a form of worship? Do the Catholics really teach Mary is God?

The Roman Church uses its own terminology, words which in many cases mean different things from their Protestant counterpart, or which do not exist in Protestant theology. Attached at the end of this chapter is a list of such terms.

## Sacraments

The Roman Catholic Church recognizes seven sacraments. These were formalized in the present form around the twelfth century, although most had been practiced in their present form from about the sixth-to-eighth centuries. It should be noted that many churches of all denominations practice some of these sacraments, but not as sacraments. The real difference between “the Protestant and Catholic view of sacrament is not in the number or sacraments, two versus seven, but rather in the meaning and purpose of the sacraments themselves. Protestantism sees its sacraments, baptism and communion, primarily as symbols and memorials of vital theological truths. But Catholicism sees the sacraments as actually changing a person inwardly, as if through a form of spiritual empowering.”<sup>116</sup>

The sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, and their meaning are:

- ‡ Baptism which cleanses from original sin and removes other sins and is necessary for salvation.
- ‡ Confirmation is the bestowing of the Holy Spirit leading to an increase in the sanctifying grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- ‡ Penance removes the penalty of sins committed after the above two events. This removes mortal or deadly sins. Note that penance or confession is through the priests.
- ‡ Holy Eucharist (Lord’s Supper) is a resacrificing (but not a recrucifixion) of Christ applying the benefits of Calvary anew to the believer. Under the Roman Catholic view of the Holy Eucharist, the elements of the service become the actual blood and body of Christ (transubstantiation). This is the primary manner in which the Roman Catholic Church bestows blessings upon the believers.<sup>117</sup>
- ‡ Marriage – the sacrament provides “grace” to remain in the bonds of matrimony. Augustine is viewed as the major proponent of the marriage ceremony as a sacrament.
- ‡ Anointing the sick (extreme unction) is the giving of grace to those who are sick, old, or near death. It helps bestow forgiveness of sins.

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<sup>116</sup>Ankerberg, *The Facts on Roman Catholicism*, 13.

<sup>117</sup>Luther did not believe in this definition of the communion elements. His views were that the body and blood of Christ “surrounded” the elements, but that the elements did not actually become the body and blood of Christ. This doctrine is called consubstantiation. Luther was opposed by many of the other Reformers, notably Zwingli of Switzerland, who viewed the elements as bread and wine, mere memorials.



- ‡ Holy Orders provides special grace and spiritual power upon bishops, priests, and deacons “for all eternity.”

The effect of all of this is to redefine salvation.

Man is justified by works and not by faith alone.  
Pope John Paul II<sup>118</sup>

But, even the quote of the Pope is not accurate. Salvation to the Catholic Church has become faith in Jesus Christ plus works plus the application of the sacraments!

## And, then there is Mary

While Christians admit Mary’s uniqueness, the Catholic Church has, in its own words, “clarified her position and nature through Sacred Tradition”. Through the centuries, more and more doctrines concerning her have been “revealed.” For example:

- ‡ Mary’s Immaculate conception teaches that Mary was born without original sin.
- ‡ Mary’s perpetual virginity
- ‡ Mary’s bodily assumption teaches that Mary never experienced physical death
- ‡ Mary is co-redemptrix and mediatrix of all graces, making her equal with Christ
- ‡ Mary is entitled to veneration and worship

As an example, the Roman Catholic Church maintains that Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus and that biblical references suggesting Jesus had siblings are really references to cousins (paragraph 510). However, Scripture contradicts this position. For example,

### **Matthew 13:55**

*Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?*

Other scriptures to consider include Matthew 1:24-25; 12:46-47; Mark 6:2-3; John 2:12; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:4-5, and Gal 1:19. While it is true that in the Greek, the words used for brother and sister can and does refer to the cousins, the context of these versions gives the meaning that these are actual blood brothers of Jesus.

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 18, quoting the *Los Angeles Times*, March 8, 1983, Part I, 10.

This is especially true when considered against the background of Old Testament prophecy.

#### **Psalm 69:4-9**

*4 Those who hate me without a cause Are more than the hairs of my head; They are mighty who would destroy me, Being my enemies wrongfully; Though I have stolen nothing, I still must restore it. 5 O God, You know my foolishness; And my sins are not hidden from You. 6 Let not those who wait for You, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed because of me; Let not those who seek You be confounded because of me, O God of Israel. 7 Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; Shame has covered my face. 8 **I have become a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children;** 9 Because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, And the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me.*

This Messianic psalm clearly shows that the Messiah would have natural brothers and sisters.

There is sufficient biblical doctrine to refute each of the other Mary teachings as well.

## **Purgatory**

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1030, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation, but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven." What this amounts to is a statement that the grace of the Cross is insufficient to wipe away sin. Thus, in purgatory, a believer pays for the penalty of sins, even if the guilt of those sins have already been forgiven by the sacrament of penance. According to Catholic doctrine, purgatory is not supposed to be a place of punishment, but of purification. The nature of this purification, according to different Catholic theologians, ranges from an extreme awareness of loss to an intense, excruciatingly painful "purifying fire."

This doctrine detracts from justification by faith. In fact, the entire Catholic doctrine detracts from justification by faith and the power of the Cross. The concept of purgatory effectively says that there are sins of believers not covered by the Cross or by the Catholics own sacrament of baptism. It is not baptism that justifies, but the gift of God by His grace (Rom 3:24). Purgatory effectively teaches that we must complete salvation through our works of suffering.

### **Ephesians 2:8-9**

*8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

And, one might ask – does purgatory amount to a second chance for salvation?

## **Vatican II**

“The council met in four sessions—1962, 1963, 1964, 1965—under John XXIII and Paul VI (about twenty-five hundred delegates came from 136 countries, in addition to Orthodox and Protestant observers). The council was characterized by a new spirit of openness. A total of sixteen constitutions or decrees came out of Vatican II. Of special importance to laypersons was permission to use vernacular languages in the liturgy, adaptation of rites to differing, non-Western cultures, and simplification of the liturgy. Whereas the Council of Trent in 1546 had declared that Scripture and tradition were equal bases of authority, Vatican II did not distinguish between the two, but emphasized their interplay or interrelatedness. In the spirit of greater sharing of authority in the church, the council declared that infallibility of the church resides in the pope and also “in the body of bishops when that body exercises supreme teaching authority with the successor of Peter.” The decree on ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, declared that both Roman Catholics and Protestants must share the blame for the division among Christians, called on Roman Catholics to play their part in the ecumenical movement, and set forth the importance of renewal as a prelude to unity. Supplementary to Vatican II was the Extraordinary Synod of November 25-December 7, 1985. While giving assent to Vatican II, its two documents stressed the duty of every Christian to engage in evangelization and to participate fully in the struggle to build a “civilization of love.” The Synod declared evangelization to be the first duty of all Christians, and it called for personal communion that existed between Catholics and other Christians and sought to manifest and increase it as much as possible with a view to eventual restoration of full communion. The Synod also addressed the social needs of the world and spoke of the need to defend human rights, but cautioned against falling into a “this-worldly humanism”; it accepted the principle of inculturation, the regeneration and transformation of culture in the light of the Gospel. Thirty years after the calling of Vatican II the Roman Catholic church looks quite different from what it did before the Council. Now worship services are conducted in the language of the people. The priest often distributes both elements to participants in the communion and faces the congregation as he leads them in celebration of the sacrament. Biblical exposition and congregational singing are common elements of Catholic worship services. A Bible in the language of the people may at least be found in most American Catholic homes. Interaction between Catholics and Protestants has been much more pronounced as they have cooperated in

social and political action, and as charismatics in both camps have enjoyed a common experience.”<sup>119</sup>

Did the Council actually change the Roman Catholic Church? Outwardly yes. It made Christianity more accessible to the laity of Catholicism by giving them the Bible in their own language. This makes it easier to hold discussions with Catholics over Scripture, although the Catholics have their own translations of the Bible. But, the same sacraments, the same Tradition still prevails. There are certainly saved, believing Catholics. But there are a lot of Catholics who have not placed their faith in Christ, but in the rituals of the church.

## Catholics Today

Catholicism today is a vast mix, not a unified umbrella. While it is true that there still is but one pope, one governing body, and one set of priests, at the local level, Catholicism suffers from the same fractures as Protestantism.

Consider the possible list as given by Ankerberg:<sup>120</sup>

- ‡ Nominal or Social Catholics – those born or married into the church but without theological knowledge. Catholics in name only.
- ‡ Syncretistic/eclectic Catholics – Catholics who have combined, in varying degrees, pagan religions of the indigenous culture into the church. This especially exists in parts of Mexico and South America and is a potential threat in Africa.
- ‡ Traditional or Orthodox Catholics – the conservative, traditionalists who hold to the doctrines of the Council of Trent
- ‡ Moderate Catholics – this is the Catholicism of Vatican II which is neither entirely liberal nor entirely conservative
- ‡ Ethnic or cultural Catholics – Catholicism as retained by migrants to America who use their religion to provide a sense of belonging.
- ‡ Lapsed or apostate Catholics – those members largely indifferent to the Catholic Church
- ‡ Charismatic Catholics – those who, like the Pentecostals, seek the baptism of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues
- ‡ Evangelical Catholics – those who have reject the traditional teachings of the Church and are truly saved, but who, like a young Martin Luther, seek to work from within the Church and change it

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<sup>119</sup>Howard Frederic Vos, *Exploring church history [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1994 by Howard F. Vos.*

<sup>120</sup>Ankerberg, *The Facts on Roman Catholicism*, 11.

## **The Apostles' Creed**

This well-known creed lies as the basis of most other religious statements of belief. The origin of this creed is unknown. Although it bears the name of the apostles, it did not originate with them. It was written after the close of the New Testament. The creed sets forth the original tenets of the Christian faith and appears to have been used by the early church as both a part of the liturgy and as a defense of the faith.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic<sup>121</sup> Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

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<sup>121</sup>The term “catholic” does not refer to the Roman Catholic Church. The word “catholic” in its original sense means “universal,” so the phrase could be read as “the holy universal Church,” that is the world-wide church of Jesus Christ.

## Catholic Terminology<sup>122</sup>

This list of terms used by the Catholic church is brief and succinct. It should help those who are learning about Catholicism and who desire to be conversant with Catholics on their terms.

**Absolution** - the act of releasing someone from their sin by God, through the means of a priest.

**Actual sin** - any sin that a person commits.

**Annunciation** - When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she was to be the mother of the Messiah.

**Assumption** - the taking of the body and soul of Mary, by God, into glory. Catholic doctrine, apparently, does not state whether or not Mary died.

**Baptism** - One of seven sacraments that takes away original sin and actual sin.

**Bishop** - the head of a diocese, successor of the apostles.

**Blessed Sacrament** - the elements of the communion supper, bread and wine, which become the body and blood of Christ. It is offered at the altar in the church.

**Capital sins** - the seven causes of all sin: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth.

**Confession** - telling sins to a priest and the Lord forgives the person through the priest.

**Confessional** - a small compartment where the priest hears the confessed sins of a sinner.

**Confirmation** - a ceremony performed by a bishop that is supposed to strengthen a person and enable him to resist sin. It is usually done at the age of 12. The Bishop dips his right thumb in holy oil and anoints the person on the forehead by making the sign of the cross and says, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit."

**Consecration** - a moment during the ceremony of the mass where God, allegedly through the priest, changes bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus.

**Contrition** - extreme sorrow for having sinned with a deep repentance concerning that sin.

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<sup>122</sup><http://www.carm.org/rc/rcterms.htm>

**Diocese** - an area of many parishes presided over by a bishop.

**Eucharist** - The elements of the communion supper where the bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ.

**Extreme Unction** - A sacrament given to a person who in danger of dying. It is intended to strengthen the person's soul and help his love be pure so they may enter into heaven. It is done through prayer and the anointing of oil. This is also known as Anointing of the Sick

**Guardian Angel** - a special angel assigned by God to each person in order to protect and guide that person with the goal of reaching heaven.

**Heresy** - denial of the truths found in the Catholic Church.

**Holy Chrism** - the special oil used in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

**Holy Orders** - one of the seven sacraments by which men, bishop, deacons, and priests, are given the power and authority by a bishop to offer sacrifice and forgive sins.

**Holy Water** - Special water that has been blessed by a priest, bishop, etc. or a liturgical ceremony. It is used to bring a blessing to a person when applied.

**Host** - the bread in the communion supper that is changed into the body of Christ.

**Immaculate Conception** - The teaching that Mary was conceived without original sin.

**Indulgence** - a means by which the Catholic church takes away some of the punishment due the Christian in this life and/or purgatory because of his sin.

**Laity** - the members of the Catholic church who are not in the clergy.

**Lent** - a forty day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. Usually it is accompanied by some form of prayer and fasting.

**Mass** - a reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ cross in a ceremony performed by a priest. This ceremony is symbolically carried out by the priest and involves Consecration where the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus.

**Mortal Sin** - a serious and willful transgression of God's Law. It involves full knowledge and intent of the will to commit the sin. If left unrepentant, can damn someone to eternal hell.

**Original Sin** - the inherited sin nature of Adam that resulted from Adam's sin.

**Parish** - a subdivision of a diocese with the priest as its head.

**Passion** - The sufferings of Christ from the time of the Last Supper to His Crucifixion.

**Penance** - a means by which all sins committed after baptism are removed. The means are assigned by a priest and usually consist of special prayers or deeds performed by the sinner.

**Peter** - the first pope.

**Pope** - Christ's representative on earth. He is the visible successor of Peter.

**Priest** - one who mediates between God and man and administers the sacraments and graces of God. He has received the Holy Orders.

**Purgatory** - a place of temporary punishment where the Christian is cleansed from sin before they can enter into heaven.

**Relic** - a part of the body of a saint including clothing, jewelry, etc. The relic is considered holy due to its association with the saint.

**Rosary** - A string of beads containing five sets with ten small beads. Each set of ten is separated by another bead. It also contains a crucifix. It is used in saying special prayers, usually to Mary where the rosary is used to count the prayers.

**Sacrament** - an outward sign of God's grace.

**Sacramentals** - Special prayers, deeds, or objects used to gain spiritual benefits from God.

**Saint** - A very holy person. Usually, it is someone who has been dead for many years and has been canonized by the Catholic Church. Saints do not have to pass through purgatory.

**Scapular** - two small cloth squares joined by a string. One cloth is positioned in the front and the other in the back. Indulgences are attached to the them.

**Sign of the Cross** - A sacramental. It is the movement of the right hand from the forehead to the chest and then left and right upon the shoulders.

**Tradition** - handing down through the centuries from mouth to mouth of the teachings of Jesus. It

began with the apostles and continues unbroken to the present bishopric of the Catholic Church.



**Transubstantiation** - The teaching that the bread and wine in the communion supper become the body and blood of the Lord Jesus at the Consecration during the Mass.

**Venerate** - to honor, admire, and regard with respect.

**Venial Sin** - A sin but not as bad as Mortal Sin. It lessens the grace of God within a person's soul.

**Vicar of Christ** - the Pope.

# Liberalism

An infallible book is an impossible conception, and today no one really believes our Bible is such a book.<sup>123</sup>

Dr. Lyman Abbott

One who really cares for the church instead of resigning and withdrawing is conscientiously bound to remain in and bring as many of his brethren as possible around to his way of thinking.<sup>124</sup>

Prof. Fagnani, *In Praise of Heresy*

**Liberalism:** A theological attitude which enthrones human reason as the ultimate authority instead of the Bible. This view ignores the effect of the Fall on the mind. Liberal theologians vary in their conclusions and generally deny or redefine some or all of the essential doctrines of Christianity.<sup>125</sup>

It would be fairly easy to argue that the above definition applies to all the groups we have studied thus far. Indeed, most of the cults and false religions have several attributes in common, not the least of which is the placement of man above God. In each century since Christ, man has changed and modified God's Word. While some doctrines receive more emphasis at a given point in time, a general survey of the false religions of each period would show the following doctrinal errors:

- ✍ Claimed to have a deeper and truer view of Christianity
- ✍ Rejected the inerrancy of the Holy Scripture
- ✍ Belief in one's self is belief in God
- ✍ Christ delivers men by His coming and not by the atonement of the Cross
- ✍ Rejection of the virgin birth
- ✍ Salvation by illumination

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<sup>123</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 116.

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>125</sup>W.A. Criswell, *Believer's Study Bible [computer file], electronic ed.*, Logos Library System, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1991 by the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies.

This is, essentially, the Gnostic teachings fought by Paul in its pre-birth form. This sums up the heresies of the early centuries. This is the fight of both the 1800s and the 1900s and will surely be the fight of the 2000s. As Sir William Ramsay wrote, in the late 1800s, of the “modernist”

The Modernist theologian knows all that I do not know. He has no hesitation; he fixes the limits of the possible and knows exactly what is impossible. . . . He knows all things, and he is content and happy in his utter ignorance. . . . He believes in the so-called laws of nature, and thinks that he knows. . . . The Modernist is no more than a survival from the remote past.<sup>126</sup>

The present day philosopher will tell you that modernism is dead and has given way to post-modernism. They will explain the differences as being directed toward the rejection of reason. Modernism still believed in reason, while post-modernism does not. The biblical scholar will tell you that liberalism died under its own weight. Each, by its own definitions, will be correct. But, in order to understand modern day society and the new religions which lurk just over the horizon, we must understand liberalism or modernism as it affects Christianity, for as all that has come before, it is really just the past – with a new dress.

## History

Although most consider the time frame of liberalism to be from about 1850 until about 1920, its life starts earlier and lasts longer. Its effects have been from the beginning and are still felt today within the church.

To fully understand the history of liberalism, you need to remember the entire history of the Church of Christ as we reviewed it in the chapter on the Roman Catholic Church. As we noted, even though the Reformers broke with Roman, disputes within the various groups, over such matters as the meaning of the Lord’s Supper and the method and place of baptism, quickly divided the Reformers. While the Church returned to the Scriptures, not everyone agreed upon the same interpretation and application of the Scriptures. This was the birth of denominations.

While the major denominations have adopted views about the meaning of the Lord’s Supper and the place and method of baptism, some of the other matters remain unresolved and have helped to contribute to the growth of the modern “liberalism.” For example, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) was one of the last of the early, great church fathers. One of the battles he faced was with Pelagius over the place of free will in the initial humbling of man to salvation. Augustine’s main work in this battle

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<sup>126</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, 113, quoting Ramsay from A. J. Pollock, *Modernism versus the Bible*, 31.

was *On the Free Will* (388–395), although he also wrote some thirteen letters against Pelagius.

Pelagius, and his pupil, Celestius, basically argued that man had the ability to turn to God for salvation. Augustine argued that man was so depraved by the initial fall, that all the steps of salvation must come from God. Augustine's views were adopted by the Council of Carthage (411). Against Augustine, Celestius had argued that (1) Adam died because he was mortal and not because of his sin; (2) there is no original sin; (3) infants are without sin, as Adam was before his fall; and (4) man can live without sin through his own effort.

During the Reformation, Luther would fight with over this same issue. But the great battle was between Calvin and Arminius. Although Arminius' position was not as different from Calvin's as some of his followers, the two names are the ones we associate with the two positions. The points at issue are:

- ▶ The total depravity of man
- ▶ The issue of unconditional election and the meaning of foreknowledge and predestination
- ▶ Did Christ die for all men or only for the church (limited atonement)?
- ▶ Can man resist grace?
- ▶ The perseverance of the saints, that is, can you lose your salvation

While people still will ask you if you are a Calvinist or an Arminian, they probably really do not understand the differences between Calvin and Arminian. If they are Arminian, they have, rather, learned it from John Wesley. Wesley felt that Calvinism taught a defeated attitude, resulting in a failure of evangelism. Wesley saw Arminianism as having several distinct advantages, namely:

- ▶ God never ordains evil. Calvinism says God ordained evil.
- ▶ God saves all He can, not just those elected before hand.
- ▶ Calvinism is fatalistic, Arminianism leads to evangelism.

Which is right? A close study of these issues leads one to conclude there are grave difficulties with both positions. Neither is completely satisfactory.<sup>127</sup> Calvinism is the stricter, being fatalistic at the extremes leading to a smugness. Arminianism, at it's other extreme, potentially supports the concept of universal salvation. Those who strictly support either position find efforts at combining the two unsatisfactory. Yet, I believe most conservative scholars, upon close scrutiny, are a little of each. Man

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<sup>127</sup>For a good summary of the positions, albeit written by a Calvinist, see Erwin Lutzer, *The Doctrines That Divide*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1989, 1998. Norman L. Geisler has written a new book entitled *Chosen But Free*, Bethany House Publishers, which is advertised as presenting a "balanced approach" to the controversy. I have not read this book.

does not have enough knowledge to answer all of the questions either system desires to address.

The real problem with either of these is at the extremes. Calvinism leads to a smugness resulting almost in a legalism that creates a laziness. God does all the work so there is nothing for man to do but sit around and enjoy life. At the other extreme, Arminianism, especially for those mainline churches following Wesley, produces the potential for true liberalism to sneak in the door. With liberalism comes man's ability to change the choices, rather than just participate with God.

Following the Reformation, controversy did not end and the organized church in Rome did not sit still. Consider the following Councils which tended to separate even further the church at Rome from the Reformers:

- ◀ Before the Reformation, the Council at Florentine (1439) adopted the seven sacraments: Eucharist (Lord's Supper), baptism, confirmation, penance (the forgiveness of sins), matrimony, holy orders, and extreme unction (the anointing of those in danger of death).
- ◀ In response to the events of the Reformation, the Council of Trent (1546) added the Apocrypha as official books of the Bible.
- ◀ In 1863 the Roman Catholic Church declared that salvation was only available through the Roman Church.
- ◀ The Vatican Council of 1870 defined the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope.

The Reformation and the formation of the Protestant denominations become the true "start" of the Roman Catholic Church, although its roots go far back into the Church of Christ.

## Man "at his best"

On a secular level comes the Renaissance (1350-1650). Man "found" himself. Literature and the artists took center stage. Large building programs and great masterpieces of art became "the thing." New theories of science and education were developed. It is against this background that liberalism arises. **Liberalism refers to the attempt to harmonize the Christian faith with all of human culture.** Where Constantine had mixed church and state, liberalism sought to mix church and culture. The major problem with the effort arose from the measuring stick being used by the proponents.

In part, all of those “great” scientists you studied in school led the way. Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543), Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564), Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), Galileo Galilei (1546-1642), and others forged the modern scientific attitude in the Western world. Their views were often opposed by established religious authorities. Unitarianism, a cult we will study shortly, developed during this period. This group denied the Deity of Jesus and would influence others in the development of religious thought.

In a revolt against what was viewed as the strict scholastic approach of the Protestant Reformers, a group called the Pietist arose (1650-1725). This group believed in the inspiration of Scripture, but placed equal (or greater(?)) importance upon individual feelings. While the first generation of Pietists remained faithful to Scripture, each succeeding generation lost its ability to use the Scriptures as a basis for decision. This helped the development of deism, skepticism, and rationalism.

Deism (c. 1625) was a religion mostly of Britain and the Americas. The roots of Deism were much older and developed along a theory of natural theology. Deism teaches God left certain impressions of Himself in all men, so, all religions could be validated. Deism believed in a Creator who then walked away from His creation and did not interfere with its operation – or with men’s lives. This left man in control, the exact position man desired.

Skepticism is the tool of the French (c. 1725). Human reason, science, and education are the way to build a proper society. Religion is not. David Hume (1711-1776) is the leading proponent, arguing that empirical studies (the sciences!) are the proper method of proving religion.

Rationalism was the tool of the Germans. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) sets the stage by arguing that man’s power lies in his own hands, if it is properly used. This allows for a variety of theological methods designed to review, study, and dissect Scripture (commonly called “criticism.”<sup>128</sup>). Bacon’s approach was inductive. Start with who and where you are and work back to the beginning. The tenets of Deism lead to the materialistic views of Hobbes (1588-1679) and the naturalistic views of Spinoza (1632-1677) and Descartes (1596-1650).

Hume’s statement sums up the true position of all of these. “A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these

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<sup>128</sup>It should be noted that criticism comes in two flavors. Lower criticism is the valid study of manuscripts in an effort to develop true readings. It deals with the transmission problems of the text. Higher criticism is the tearing apart of what the text says. This is the tool of the liberals.

laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.”<sup>129</sup>

While many of the rationalists were against religion, all of these philosophies move directly into the field of Christianity when Jean Astruc (1684-1766), a French doctor, proposed that the first two chapters of Genesis had different authors. His analysis was based solely upon the use of two different names for God – *Elohim* and *Yahweh*. While his theory made little headway for a considerable period of time, the Germans, Eichorn, Graf and Wellhausen (1844-1914), picked up the banner and applied it to the entire first five books of the Bible. Eventually the theory would attempt to explain that the Pentateuch was written well after the life of Moses by several different authors.<sup>130</sup> Along with the *Elohim* and *Yahweh* authors, the critics added the Levitical priestly author and the Deuteronomic legal author. Since it was perfectly obvious that it took time for the law and the religious rituals to develop (“evolve”), these passages must have been written toward the end of the Old Testament life of the Israelites. In other words, God did not write the Bible, man did!<sup>131</sup>

## World View versus Bible

Liberalism arose in the context of attempting to focus Christians on the concerns of society as much as upon personal faith. In the “modern world” the Bible could not be considered a supernatural book. “The Bible can be employed only for theology and basic morality, but not in the details of life because of the change in the position of Christianity in society.”<sup>132</sup>

The view expressed, and effectively maintained by all liberal theologians, is that the Bible merely contains the Word of God. The binding elements of this Word will be recognized by the believer by their content in the believer’s life. In other words, the Bible is not the Word of God, it merely becomes the Word of God to a given individual in a given circumstance. Thus, your Word of God will be different from my Word of God.

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<sup>129</sup>Geisler, Normal L., and Nix, William E., *A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised and Expanded*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Press) 1986.

<sup>130</sup>This is the type of analysis we now call higher criticism.

<sup>131</sup>Notice that while Charles’ Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) was not a religious work, his evolutionary principles have been applied to the writing of Scripture.

<sup>132</sup>Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible, Revised and Expanded*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1986, Logos electronic edition, article on *Liberalism*, quoting Albrecht Ritschl, as found in D. Clair Davis, *Liberalism: The Challenge of Progress* in Lewis and Demarest, Eds., *Challenges to Inerrancy*, 67-68, where Ritschl’s *The Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* (1882) is cited. Ritschl (1822-1889) is considered by many to be the father of theological liberalism.

The second/third great liberal theologian, Wilhelm Herrmann (1846-1922) summed it up in the statement that an individual “does not become a Christian by submitting to some doctrines but by recognizing the great fact of Jesus. Faith in the doctrines about him cannot be demanded as the prerequisite for salvation by Jesus, but rather as the result of that salvation. . . . The only objective ground for the truth of Christianity is one’s moral transformation.”<sup>133</sup>

One might ask, what great fact about Jesus? How can there be any great facts about Jesus without a clear understanding of who Jesus is? Who Jesus is, is doctrine!

Before Ritschl came Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant argued that man could know God solely from reason verified by experience. Man “*did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 21:25). Horace Busnell (1802-1876) was a key figure in the Unitarian movement and is credited with the redefining of terms to suit his own purposes. This undermined the meaning of traditional theological terms, creating more division within Christianity.

Clearly, what went on was an eroding of the status of God’s Word. Scripture was no longer sacred. The liberals still claim to follow Luther’s “*Only Scripture*,” but they do not hold the same high view of Scripture as did Luther, Calvin, and the other Reformers. Scripture becomes subject to analysis just like any other work. Methods of setting Scripture “in its station in life,” looking for the myths and stories which went into its writing, come into vogue. Science adds its two cents to the pot, for history and science greatly contradict Scripture. Which is to be believed?

The liberals chose science and history!

## Liberal Results

The attack on the Bible allowed the liberals to re-write the meanings of Scriptural episodes. Since the point of liberalism was to de-supernaturalize all of Scripture, the list of doctrines affected becomes lengthy. The belief of predestination, the Fall, the total depravity of man, original guilt as a result of original sin, substitutionary atonement, the inerrant inspiration of Scripture, and eternal punishment all went out the window.

Since man was in control, man could reason his way to better things through the proper use of his mind, science, the arts, and so on. But, liberalism, as a religious tool, fell under its own weight. Several events led to this collapse, although it is to be noted that many of the facets of liberalism live on in other philosophical forms.

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid, citing Davis, 73-74.



- ‡ First, archeology became a keystone of Christianity. The criticism of the Pentateuch was based upon assumptions such as the inability of those “barbarian” people to write anything, let alone Scripture. In 1887 the Tel-el-Amarna tablets were discovered and dated to the age of Moses or earlier. Barbarian man could write!
- ‡ The next, immediate, strand of argument was that the advanced morality of the Deuteronomic law was beyond the capabilities of a Moses. Then, in 1891 the Code of Khamurabi was discovered. The Code was dated to a period a thousand years before Abraham! Ancient man was civilized!
- ‡ There then ensued a great defense of Christianity by conservative scholars. In the time frame of 1910-1912, R.A. Torrey, A.C. Dixon, and Louis Meyer edited a series of apologetic articles on the doctrines of Christianity. These were published under the title *The Fundamentals* and may still be found in print today. Unfortunately, while amply defending the orthodox doctrine against the liberals, many of these doctrines became internal battlegrounds for denominations. As more and more clergy with a liberal bent invaded the church, the battle lines were drawn between what we now call the fundamentalists and the liberals.
- ‡ The other blow to liberalism, as a tool of religion, was World War I. The concept of Darwinism was that evolution should produce more and more improvement, moving toward an utopian state. The World War showed that movement was not going this direction. Liberalism could not withstand the pressures of these various events and as a religious philosophy (but not necessarily as an on-going practice) has disappeared from the scene.

## New Liberalism - Neo-Orthodoxy

But where liberalism has disappeared, the presuppositions of liberalism over the Bible have remained. Liberalism was replaced by neo-orthodoxy, the “new orthodox.” Neo-orthodoxy was the reaction to the failure of liberalism. The theologians suffered a general loss of faith in evolutionary naturalism as well as a conviction that pure scientific objectivity could find historical truth. Although neo-orthodoxy appears to have a higher view of Scripture than did liberalism, the new orthodoxy still denies the inerrant inspiration of Scripture. Karl Barth’s *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* published in 1919 is considered by many to be the start of neo-orthodoxy, although Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) contributed many of the ideas. Kierkegaard believed God was so far above man that it was impossible to know God, except through experience.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>Many call Kierkegaard’s theology the “theology of despair” and mark it as the birth of existentialism, the emphasis on personal experience as the standard of reality.

Barth (1886-1968) taught that God could not be known objectively but only through experience. This discredits the position of Scripture in knowing God. The Bible is not the revelation but a witness to the revelation. Jesus is the focal point of revelation. But, since the stories of Jesus are history, there can be errors in the stories. In fact, the Bible is mostly a compilation of myths or sagas which are not the Word of God. Man can only get to God by a blind “leap of faith.” Barth was joined by Reinhold Niebhuur (1893-1971), Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), and Paul Tillich (1886-1965).

As an approach to religion, neo-orthodoxy has passed from the scene and given way to a variety of “newer” approaches, such as process theology which sees God as all. And pieces of all these may be found in movements such as radical humanism and secular theologies such as “the-death-of-God theology,” liberation theology, feminist theology, Black theology, and a variety of other similar specialized branches. Likewise, much of the modern ecumenical movement stems from the roots of liberalism, including much of the work of Bernard Ramm (1916-1992). And, all of this will help lead to post-modernism and the wide acceptance of the new religions of the New Age movement.<sup>135</sup>

## Thoughts

Liberalism eroded the fringes of Christianity. This degrading of the place of Scripture resulted in much bad doctrine, initially about the truth and faithfulness of God and Christ, but ultimately about side issues so prevalent in today’s society. Consider:

- ✍ Homosexuality in the church, including in the pulpit
- ✍ Homosexual marriages
- ✍ Females being ordained
- ✍ Sex outside of marriage
- ✍ Standards of right and wrong, indeed the lack of any absolute standards
- ☹ Political correctness as an interpretive tool
- ☹ Interfaith communion
- ☹ All roads leading to God, regardless of the starting point

The concepts of liberalism become the vehicles of “dialogue.” The inter-faith movement relies upon such an approach. By inter-faith I do not mean Presbyterians and Baptists, but Christians and Hindus. This movement will ultimately pave the

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<sup>135</sup>For those interested in a more detailed history of Christianity, I would recommend Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries*. The edition I have is marked Revised and Enlarged Edition, Grand Rapids: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1954, 1981. I believe there is a newer Third Edition which has been recently released. Another single volume history is Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*, Dallas: Word Publishing, 1982.

path for the one-world religion of the Antichrist. By converting views of God from doctrine to philosophy, the Hindu can meet with the “Christian” and find a common ground.

Liberalism is dead, but liberalism lives on. Such are the tools of Satan!

## The Beliefs of Liberalism, and those who follow

- ✍ **The Bible** is one among other significant religious books having important spiritual insight.
- ✍ **God** is love. All other attributes are subordinate to this concept.
- ✍ **Justice** is never vindictive but always for the good of the person. God can only do what is good, so His justice will ultimately **work good to all**.
- ✍ **Man** evolved by the power of God, not by creation as a fact. Human nature may become perfect in this world.
- ✍ This view of God and God's power does not allow for the belief in the **Trinity**. The **Holy Spirit** is not a Person and **Jesus** is a "man among men." He is the ultimate example and teacher of the human race, but deifying Christ is an act of idolatry.
- ✍ **Salvation** is the integration of one into one's self and one's society.
- ✍ The "**good news**" is that men by nature are the children of God.
- ✍ The future is here and now. The **millennium** will arrive when the good news has brought goodness to all areas of life.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>See Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, 138, for a more detailed listing of liberal beliefs.

# Secular Religions

Man is the measure of all things.

Protagoras

Greek Philosopher<sup>137</sup>

This title is a bit of a misnomer. In a sense, by definition, there are no secular religions, because by their definitions, these groups do not believe in religion. Remember the definition of religion from chapter 1?

Religion is “that aspect of one’s experience in which he attempts to live harmoniously with the power or powers he believes are controlling the world.”<sup>138</sup>

But, pluralism speaks to moral systems and improvement of the individual. Under pluralism, and most other definitions, religion is any system designed to develop and improve the morals and social structure of a given society or segment of society. That is, religion is whatever a man is deeply concerned with. Since the those striving for moral improvement of the society belief in some power controlling the world, man, by their own definition, pluralism becomes a religion, regardless of the path they follow.

We looked at many of these “religions” briefly in our introduction. We will not spend much time on them here either, but it is important to understand that these world views constitute a religion under the general definition. The practioners of the world views have a religion, even if they call it something else.

So, consider the following suggested religions:

**Atheism** is not a religion or a complete ethical system. It is simply the lack of a belief that deity, in the form of one or more supernatural gods or goddesses, exists. The word is coined from the Greek, “*theos*,” meaning God, and the anti-prefix “*a*,” which makes the word a negative, thus, against God or no God. Plato defined two

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<sup>137</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today’s Religions*, San Bernardino, California: Campus Crusade for Christ published by Here’s Life Publishers, Inc., 1983, 459.

<sup>138</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today’s Religions*, 11.

types of atheists, those who are sincerely convinced God does not exist, and those who are sincerely convinced there is no place for God in this world. In our general time, Madalyn Murray O'Hair, who fought the Supreme Court case to have prayer removed from the schools, is the best known atheist.

**Agnosticism** is also not a religion or complete ethical system. It is simply a belief that we cannot prove the existence **or** the non-existence of deity; (i.e. of one or more gods, one or more goddesses, or combinations of the above). Many Agnostics believe that we cannot know anything about deity or deities at the present time, but that this could conceivably change in the future. Voltaire, Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin, and Bertrand Russell are well known agnostics. Huxley coined the term in, fact. He took the Greek word *gnosis*, which we now means knowledge. He add the Greek prefix "*a*" to the word, making it a negative, thus, "no knowledge." Agnostics appear to fit into three categories:

Agnostic theists are those who believe that a deity probably exists

Agnostic atheists are those who not believe a deity exists

Empirical agnostics are those who believe that God may exist, but that little or nothing can be known about him/her/it/them.

What is important about these two views is that the picture of God and religion held by the atheist and the agnostic create large presuppositions against which the holder creates his world views. This leads to moving some other entity or power into a position of god-ship. In other words, holding one of these two views about God makes it easier to adopt a philosophical world view which ignores God.

**Humanism** is a philosophy which, in most cases, embraces Agnosticism or Atheistic belief about the non-existence of a deity. But it goes further to create ethical systems based upon reason and logic. It regards humanity as the measure of all things and had its founding in the rationalistic movements of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This group values knowledge based on reason and hard evidence rather than on faith. Humans are supreme under this system and the concept of a personal God is rejected. This results in the belief that full responsibility for the future of the world, its political systems, its ecology, etc. rests with humans. There is no God in heaven to intervene in a disaster. In general, humanists value freedom of inquiry, expression and action, and have a history of combating bigotry, hatred, discrimination, intolerance and censorship. Ethically, they are generally very liberal, supporting "movements" such as homosexuality, abortion, and assisted suicide. Modern humanists include Isaac Asimov, Albert Einstein, feminist activist Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, Jonas Salk, Julian Huxley, and Bertrand Russell.

Barna Research believes that as much as 7% of the U.S. population falls into these three groups. That would amount to more than 14 or 15 million people, making this group larger than the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jewish, or Muslim.<sup>139</sup>

Consider the modern world and the wide range of world causes. Most are based upon some variation of humanism or rationalism mixed with the lack of fear of God. This leads to the adoption of evolution, ecological issues, animal rights, self-rights, and the like, as world views which govern one's way of life. In reality, these world views mix with other philosophies and, perhaps, more properly should be classified with New Age. But humanism, Marxism, skepticism, and the like, are religions of the secular society.

Modern humanism is governed by two writing manifestos, the first appearing in 1933 and the second in 1973. The points of Humanist Manifesto II are listed at the end of this chapter.

As indicated, there are other secular religions.

**Skepticism** is the philosophy of those who believe that real knowledge is not attainable. If this is so, then judgment should be suspended about matters of truth. Does this sound familiar? How about rephrasing that last to say that since matters of truth cannot be measured, any truth will do, even if it is contrary to what we would call an absolute truth? Skepticism has been hanging around for centuries in one form or another and it is important to develop an understanding of whether your antagonist is an atheist, a skeptic, or an agnostic. They all use the same terms, but give them different meanings. Descartes (1596-1650) and David Hume (1711-1776) are two of the great skeptics of the more recent times.

**Marxism** and communism are another world view which substitutes as a religion. Marxism is not just about economics and politics. It is a world view intent on explaining life. That is why Marxist and communist countries are atheist at heart. This world view is against religions, the individual is lost in favor of a classless society, and economics becomes the instrument of the state.

The other secular world view is that of **existentialism**. Existentialism is not a philosophy in its own right, but rather is a collection of widely different revolts against traditional philosophy. As such, the definitions of existentialism differ based upon who is providing the definition. Bochenki provides six themes as the basis of existentialism.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>[http://www.religioustolerance.org/at\\_ag\\_hu.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/at_ag_hu.htm) citing "Atheists and Agnostics Infiltrating Christian Churches," 1999-OCT-15, at: <http://www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=2>

<sup>140</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, 481.

- ❑ Experience is the measuring ground
- ❑ Existence is the major object of inquiry
- ❑ Existence preceding essence
- ❑ man as pure subjectivity and not part of a cosmic life process
- ❑ Interdependence of man and his world
- ❑ Devaluation of intellectual knowledge

Kierkegaard and Hegel fall into the category of existentialists along with Paul Tillich.

Notice that in many instances, a person can fall under more than one category within the confines of these world views. Bertrand Russell is seen, for example, as both a humanist and an agnostic. The real point of looking at these faith systems is to note how they have been, and are being used, to shape the future of religion. Just as liberalism invaded Christianity, those who do not believe in Christianity or God will, ultimately, follow the same general path as the liberals, the neo-liberals, and those coming after them. Pluralism will ultimately reign in the form of a future version of what we now call New Age.

For those who do not want to believe in a God, Satan has a pathway ready to accommodate them. All roads, according to these various belief systems, will lead to “salvation.” Only, they misunderstand the definition of salvation.

**Matthew 7:13**

*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.*



## Humanist Manifesto II<sup>141</sup>

- ▶ Traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation and God above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species.
- ▶ Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.
- ▶ Moral values derive their source from human experience.
- ▶ Reason and intelligence are the most effective instruments that humankind possesses.
- ▶ The dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value.
- ▶ In the area of sexuality, intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religion, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized.
- ▶ To enhance freedom and dignity, the individual must experience a full range of civil liberties in all societies (freedom of speech and press, political democracy, fair judicial process, religious liberty, freedom of association, artistic, scientific, and cultural freedom, euthanasia).
- ▶ An open and democratic society.
- ▶ Separation of church and state and separation of ideology and state are imperatives.
- ▶ Human societies should evaluate economic systems by whether or not they increase economic well being for all individuals and groups.
- ▶ Moral equality must be furthered through the elimination of all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin.
- ▶ The division of humankind on nationalistic grounds is deplored.
- ▶ The world community must renounce the resort to violence and force as a method of solving international disputes.
- ▶ The world community must engage in cooperative planning concerning the use of rapidly depleting resources.
- ▶ The problems of economic growth and development can no longer be resolved by one nation alone; they are worldwide in scope.
- ▶ Technology is a vital key to human progress and development. Give it away.
- ▶ Communications and transportation must be expanded across political frontiers.

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<sup>141</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, 463ff. Drafted by Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson, the actual Manifesto is considerably longer than the annotations given here.

# Freemasonry

## Masonic Lodge "Masons"

When is a religion not a religion?  
When it calls itself something else?

By any definition of religion accepted by our critics, we cannot qualify as a religion.

Dr. M.W. Thomas S. Roy  
Grand Master fo the Grand Lodge  
of Massachusetts

Freemasonry certainly requires a belief in the existence of, and man's dependence upon, a Supreme Being to whom he is responsible. What can a church add to that except to bring into one fellowship those who have like feelings? . . . That is exactly what the Lodge does.

Henry Wilson Coil  
*Masonic Encyclopedia*  
#1 Recommended Book  
for reading by Masons<sup>142</sup>

The Masonic Lodge is a secret fraternal organization whose teachings and practices constitute a religion. Also known as the Free and Accepted Masons, there are 4.75 million members worldwide. The Masons teach fellowship, religious toleration, and political compromise. Drawing on guild practices of medieval stonemasons, the order's first Grand Lodge was organized in London (1717).<sup>143</sup>

Freemasons are arguably the nation's oldest fraternal order. Commenced as a stonemason's trade guild, the order soon became a club for tradesmen, merchants, and a few much-celebrated noblemen. The Masonic lodges moved to the coastal

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<sup>142</sup>Both quotes are taken from John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *The Facts on The Masonic Lodge*, The Anker Series, Eugene, Or: Harvest House Publishers, 1989, 12, 13.

<sup>143</sup><http://www.otherside.net/masons.htm> has an article which argues that King Agrippa (Acts 25:13) created masonry.

towns of America in the 1730/1740s. These groups were dominated by a mercantile elite, but tradesmen were admitted. The most famous may have been a young printer named Benjamin Franklin who became grand master of Pennsylvania Freemasons in 1734.

During the early 1800s the number of Masonic lodges multiplied rapidly. The order especially appealed to an emerging middle class of lawyers, commercial farmers, and independent tradesmen, many of whom were growing impatient with orthodox religion and established political elites. Partly to attenuate women's complaints about the secrecy, the cost of membership, and the time members spent away from home, most orders supported creation of ladies' auxiliaries, the Order of the Eastern Star (1869).<sup>144</sup>

## The Rites and the Rituals

The “Ritual” governs the Lodge and while there is no central authority, a review of the Ritual for each state shows they are substantially identical, with only minor word difference. The Grand Lodge is the governing authority of each state. It runs the entire show through its published Ritual.

Why are they the same? They follow the same general publications and books. Like many other cults, the doctrine comes not from the pulpit or a “bible,” but from the general literature of the “scholars” of the group. In this sense, the Freemasons foreshadow the growth of New Age theology. It is the language of these documents which the Masons speak and teach. Unless it is recognized that the theosophical philosophy of Freemasonry attributes its own definitions to biblical language, one will not understand the author's meaning. This leads to a great deal of misunderstanding about the meaning and position of the Masons and is the same tactic that has been encountered with many of the cults.

What, then, are the rites?

Every Mason must pass through three levels of the Blue Lodge. The Blue Lodge is the parent lodge of the Masons. There are three degrees of this lodge.<sup>145</sup>

- ✍ Entered Apprentice – where the initiation into the beginning of the mysteries of the fraternity are given
- ✍ Fellow Craft
- ✍ Master Mason degree

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<sup>144</sup>History has been taken mostly from <http://freemasonry.8k.com/history.html>

<sup>145</sup>[http://www.mindspring.com/~engineer\\_my\\_dna/mormon/masendow.htm](http://www.mindspring.com/~engineer_my_dna/mormon/masendow.htm) shows amazing similarities between the Mormons and Masons on rituals and secret rites.

A member of the Lodge may effectively choose to never move beyond this point. On the other hand, there are two further Rites the candidate may follow. Both proceed to higher degrees of Masonry.

One branch is the Scottish Rite, which advances by numerical degrees. Including the three degrees of the Blue Lodge, there are thirty-two active degrees and a thirty-third honorary degree, although in some lodges, this degree is also active.

The other branch is the York Rite. Here, the candidate moves through the Chapter, Council, and Commandery degrees, with the final degree being Knight Templar.

## So, is Freemasonry a religion?

Freemasonry is not Christianity ... it admits men of every creed within its hospitable bosom....

*An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*  
Albert G. Mackey, 1921, pp. 618-619

Every Masonic Lodge is a temple of religion, and its teachings are instructions in ... the universal, eternal, immutable religion....

*Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*  
Albert Pike, Washington D.C., 1958, pp. 213, 219

[Masonry is] ... the custodian and depository (since Enoch) of the great philosophical and religious truths, unknown to the world at large....

*Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*  
Albert Pike, Washington D.C., 1958, p. 210<sup>146</sup>

Most Freemasons insist that the Lodge is not a religion. This is because it does not meet the definition, it does not have a creed, and there is no ritual worship. Further, there are no religious symbols and there is no teaching of salvation. Yet, the writers of Freemasonry are mixed on this issue.

What constitutes a religion?

Well, let us accept the approach used by those Masons who deny the religious aspect of the Lodge – definition, salvation, creed, doctrinal statement, and worship ritual. We will not look at these issues in any detail, but here are the results:

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<sup>146</sup>All three quotes are as found on <http://freemasonry.8k.com>

We have already seen that at least some Masonic authors view the Lodge as meeting the definition of a religion. More particular, the Lodge teaches the existence of a Supreme Being, the Great Architect of the Universe.

- ✍ The Masonic plan of salvation involves getting to the Celestial Lodge Above. How? By good works, of course! It is found in “a purity of life and conduct which is essentially necessary to his gaining admission into that celestial Lodge above.”<sup>147</sup>
- ✍ The Ritual is the creed of the Masons.
- ✍ The Masons doctrine and theology include a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. Further, the York Rite teaches that Royal Arch degree, the lost name of God will be revealed. That name is Jahbulon. Notice that this name appears to be a combination of Jehovah and the name of two pagan gods, the Canaanite god Baal and the Egyptian god Osiris.
- ✍ The Ritual is not only the creed of the Masons, but also it is the order of worship.
- ✍ As for symbols, first, each lodge is its own temple. No one can be a member of a Lodge without swearing belief in the Supreme Being, the Great Architect of the Universe. The Lodge has a “sacred altar” on which is the Bible, Qur’an, or other holy book called the Volume of Sacred Law. And, what about the Masonic ring with the letter “G” in the stone? Could the “G” be the symbol of the Great Architect?

## The Masons and Christianity

Does the teaching of the Masons conflict with Christianity?

- ✍ The Masons teach that all men, including Masons, live in spiritual darkness until they enter and become members of the Lodge.
- ✍ The Masons believe in the universal brotherhood of man under a universal fatherhood of God.
- ✍ The Masons teach that the Bible is only a symbol of the will of God and is not to be literally believed or obeyed.
- ✍ Attaining the Celestial Lodge is achieved by good works.

The words of many Freemasons might lead the uninformed to believe that they are true brethren in Christ. An example is this statement from a Masonic publication:

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<sup>147</sup>Ankerberg, *The Facts on The Masonic Lodge*, 14. Note another similarity to Mormonism is that apparently part of the secret rituals involve the wearing of a lambskin garb as a badge of being a Mason.

God may have other words for other worlds, but His supreme Word for this world, yesterday, today, forever, is Christ! He is the central Figure of the Bible, its crown, its glory, its glow-point of vision and revelation. Take Him away and its light grows dim. He fulfilled the whole Book, its history, its poetry, its prophecy, its ritual, even as He fulfills our deepest yearning and our highest hope. Ages have come and gone, but He abides -- abides because He is real, because he is unexhausted, because He is needed. Little is left today save Christ -- Himself smitten and afflicted, bruised of God and wounded -- but He is all we need. If we hear Him, follow Him, obey Him, we shall walk together in a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness and love -- He is the Word of God (Joseph Fort Newton, "The Great Light in Masonry," *Little Masonic Library*, Vol. 3, p. 177).

Most of these teachings we have encountered in other cults. They are the standard fare of cults and heresies. The mystical schools of antiquity of found a home in the Masons, especially in some of the higher rites.

## Food For Thought

Where the roots of America Christian?

There is little doubt that the founders of the American colonies undertook the dangerous trip across the Atlantic Ocean in search of religious freedom. But, to call anyone or anything "Christian," whether an individual or a nation, certain criteria must be met. These criteria are biblical requirements, being born again of the Holy Spirit, ministering in the solely name of Jesus Christ, and accepting the authority of the Bible, or if you will, they are the essential doctrines we have been discussing.

Remember that the Pilgrims founded but a small colony in New England. They did not found the United States. And, keep in mind that among other things, the Mayflower Compact reaffirmed loyalty to the King of England. The Mayflower Pilgrims were still English at heart, they were not founding a new colony.

So, then, to determine if America was founded as a Christian nation, consider the background of those we call the founding fathers. And, as we do this, keep in mind that while Freemasons have noble attitudes and adhere to strict moral codes, one does not have to be a Christian to be a Mason. Reflect on the following list of great names from the American revolution.

- ✍ John Adams - (Spoke favorably of Freemasonry -- never joined)
- ✍ Samuel Adams - (Close and principle associate of Hancock, Revere & other Masons)
- ✍ Ethan Allen - Mason
- ✍ Edmund Burke - Mason
- ✍ John Claypoole - Mason
- ✍ William Daws - Mason
- ✍ Benjamin Franklin - Mason
- ✍ Nathan Hale - No evidence of Masonic connections
- ✍ John Hancock - Mason
- ✍ Benjamin Harrison - No evidence of Masonic connections
- ✍ Patrick Henry - No evidence of Masonic connections
- ✍ Thomas Jefferson - (Deist with some evidence of Masonic connections)
- ✍ John Paul Jones - Mason
- ✍ Francis Scott Key - No evidence of Masonic connections
- ✍ Robert Livingston - Mason
- ✍ James Madison - (Some evidence of Masonic membership)
- ✍ Thomas Paine - Humanist
- ✍ Paul Revere - Mason
- ✍ Colonel Benjamin Tupper - Mason
- ✍ George Washington - Mason

✍ Daniel Webster - (Some evidence of Masonic connections)

✍ **Summary:** 10 Masons, 3 probable Masons, 1 Humanist, 2 Advocates of Freemasonry, 4 no record of connections.

Based upon the evidence of Masonic influences in the establishment of this nation, there is no doubt that the criteria necessary to classify the United States as a Christian nation were not met. An objective study of the Masonic affiliations of the founding fathers must cause Christians to reevaluate their own political philosophy.

And what of the modern situation? Well, Norman Vincent Peal is a prelate of the Grand Encampment of the Knights Templar of the United States.



## The Way International

This is a more recent cult – and since they consider the Bible to be part of their beliefs, they call themselves Christian. Yet, it appears the Way International denies the Deity of Jesus, the Trinity, and the personhood of the Holy Spirit. They also deny salvation by grace.

Want to start a cult? Well, here's the formula. Have God talk to you and give you new revelation. Go on radio or television (or maybe the Internet) and start preaching this new doctrine. Pretty soon you will have followers.

In the case of The Way International, this is the story of Victor Paul Wierwille, a minister in the United Church of Christ. In 1942, God audibly spoke to Wierwille, providing him with the proper interpretation of the Bible. Wierwille maintained the information silently until 1957 when he started a radio program teaching and expounding on this new revelation. Although headquartered in Ohio, the group has a college in Kansas.

Wierwille demonstrated his new power by speaking in tongues. He proclaimed his new “gospel” the Power for Abundant Living. He spread his gospel by teaching courses under this name. The courses were promoted to video and are sold for \$85 a course. A course is apparently one three-hour video. There are twelve of them.<sup>148</sup> Once through this basic course which will answer 85% of your questions, there are follow-up intermediate and advanced courses.

And like all cults, it paints itself as a picture of Christ and the church. Consider the following quote from the pamphlet, *This is the Way*:

The Way International is a biblical research and teaching organization concerned with setting before men and women of all ages the inherent accuracy of the word of God (the Bible) so that everyone who desires

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238. <sup>148</sup>Kenneth Boa, Cults, *World Religions and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990,

may know the power of God in his life. The Way is not a church, nor is it a denomination or a religious sect of any sort.<sup>149</sup>

Unfortunately, the title of Wierwille's book, *Jesus is Not God*, sums up their entire position of this group. Wierwille makes a distinction between the Holy Spirit and the holy spirit. The Holy Spirit is the same as God the Father. The holy spirit is God's power.

Further,

- ✍ As to Jesus, He was not born of a virgin. Mary was artificially inseminated by God. Jesus was raised on a Saturday, and there were four persons crucified with Him, not two. He did not exist prior to His incarnation. He was, however, sinless.
- ✍ Christ's death did not provide vicarious atonement. To be saved, one must speak in tongues.
- ✍ The good news is that once you are truly saved, your spirit cannot sin. Your physical nature may commit a sin, but this does not affect your relationship with God.
- ✍ The dead are "unconscious" until they are resurrected at the judgment. Only the true believers "saved" after Pentecost are actually saved. In other words, no Old Testament saint is going to heaven!

Wierwille has openly acknowledged that the terms he uses are the same as most Christians, but that they have different meanings. Why? While The Way International proclaims the sue of the Bible, it is a use based upon the interpretation of Wierwille, not that of orthodoxy. When you change view points, the meanings may well suffer in the process. So, like all other cults, the views of its founder are elevated to the level of Scripture.

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<sup>149</sup>Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, California: Campus Crusade for Christ published by Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983, 106.

# The Unification Church

## Moonies

You're a Fundamentalist. You take the Bible too literally.

Sun Myung Moon  
*Divine Principle*, 534

With the fulness of time, God has sent His messenger to resolve the fundamental questions of life and the universe. His name is Sun Myung Moon.

*Divine Principle*, 16

Man is the visible form of God, and God is the invisible form of man. .  
. .God and man are one. Man is incarnate God.<sup>150</sup>

Sun Myung Moon  
*New Hope*, 5

Those that read the Washington Times and keep up with its ownership understand that the Moonies are the owners of this very conservative newspaper. This makes the group seem respectable. But beyond that . . .

What would you call the formulas for some of the other cults? They are similar, and yet, like different types of bread, a little different. Here, for example, one needs some Taoist philosophy, Christian terms, Bible verses, spiritism, mysticism, numerology, physics, anti-communism, and, probably, some good old fashioned pagan type cultic prostitution. Out of the oven pops a Korean Messiah!

## History

Moon was born Young Myung Moon (loosely translated "Shining Dragon Moon") in Korea in 1920. Moon's parents practiced Confucianism until their conversion to

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<sup>150</sup>Kenneth Boa, Cults, *World Religions and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990,

Presbyterianism in 1930. Moon, like many other cult leaders, claims a visit from Jesus in 1935. The message delivered during this visit was that Moon was to finish the work of establishing God's kingdom on earth. Moon set forth to develop the precepts to accomplish this, completing *Divine Principles* in 1945. Moon was imprisoned in 1946 while preaching in North Korea. Ultimately, he was freed in 1950 by the Americans involved in the Korean War. On May 1, 1954, Moon founded the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, headquartered in Seoul, South Korea. Moon moved to the United States in 1971, although Church missions arrived in 1959.

Sometime prior to 1948, Moon changed his name to Sun Myung Moon, meaning "Shining Sun and Moon." It is estimated that by 1976, Moon's Korean business holdings were worth \$15-to-\$20 million. Moon is said to have a personal net worth in excess of \$15 million, with a 25-acre estate in Irvington, New York, a luxury yacht and all the trimmings.<sup>151</sup>

The group owns many legitimate businesses and promotes social improvement. It is guessed that the Moonies move into depressed businesses, help them get back on their feet, then retain a substantial portion. The businesses include jewelers, publishers, clothing companies, and the like, on a worldwide basis. Moon himself has spent time in the US prison system for tax evasion. His most famous practice may have been the performing of a mass wedding at which some 30,000 couples were married. This occurred in Seoul in 1992.

There have been allegations made from time to time that part of Moonies pre-marital counseling included sleeping with the bride-to-be, reminding one of the pagan temple prostitutes of Old Testament times. Reverend Won Il Chei, a leading Seoul Presbyterian minister is quoted as saying, "If we believe those who have gone into this group and come out, they say that one has to receive Sun Myung Moon's blood to receive salvation. That blood is ordinarily received by three periods of sexual intercourse."<sup>152</sup> Bjornstad goes on to quote a follower of Moon's as stating, "It is entirely possible that those sexual rites were a part of the early church in Korea. Since original sin came through the woman's [Eve's] intercourse with Lucifer through which she received his evil characteristics, it is perfectly logical that the reverse of this, woman's intercourse with the perfect man through which she could receive his perfect characteristics, would liquidate original sin. Then, as Adam received Satan's

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213. <sup>151</sup>Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990,

<sup>152</sup>James Bjornstad, *The Moon is Not the Son*, Minneapolis: Dimension Books, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976, 33, quoting Chei from William J. Peterson, *Those Curious New Cults*, New Canaan, Conn: Keats Publishing Co., 1976, 250.

evil characteristics from Eve through intercourse, so man would receive perfect characteristics through intercourse with the woman.”<sup>153</sup>

The current world membership is roughly 3 million.

## Beliefs

Basic to Moon’s theology is a dualism of contracts. These include Father God and Mother God, male and female, light and dark, spirit and flesh.

- ✍ Moon still claims to receive visits and new revelation from God. His book, *Divine Principles*, is viewed as divinely inspired Scripture. The Bible is scripture along with Moon’s work *Divine Principles*.
- ✍ Moon claims to be the messiah of the Second Coming and his wife is the Holy Spirit.
- ✍ He and his wife, called The True Parents where he is the True Father and his wife, the True Mother, are the first couple to be able to bring forth children with no original sin. The Holy Spirit is ‘the True Mother,’ or ‘the Second Eve.
- ✍ The cross is the symbol of the defeat of Christianity.
- ✍ Sin is genetically based. It is not a moral issue. The thieves on the cross represent political movements.
- ✍ The thief on the right side of Jesus represents democracy. The thief on the left of Jesus is communism.
- ✍ Adam and Eve fell because of sexual sin. Eve had sexual relations with Satan.
- ✍ Jesus is a ‘true person’ though not God in flesh. The church denies the doctrine of the Trinity.
- ✍ Nature is dualistic: male and female, positive and negative, external and internal.

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., 33.

- ✍ God has an external and internal aspect called the Universal Prime Energy. It creates, develops, and sustains the cosmos. God's internal aspect of has to do with personhood - motivation, purpose and identity.
- ✍ People determine their own future place in the spirit world after death through what they do here on earth.

The cult appeals to young people who can find communal unity within the church without the peer pressure of drugs, drinking, and free sex or radical politics

How does a Moon continue in today's environment? As indicated, Moon addresses the social problems of people with help in exchange for future financial interests. His efforts are also greatly anti-communist. This stance and his philanthropic endeavors all over the world provide a great deal of garner support and influence for his one world religious system. His is a doctrine of political social outreach, which provides earthly benefits of a limited variety to his followers, but which is very self-exalting for him, producing a type of self-serving theology.

The Moonies also use the cloak of respectability and remain hidden. Consider the following groups which are all owned or controlled by the Unification Church:

- ✍ One World Crusade
- ✍ International Federation for Victory over Communism
- ✍ American Youth for a Just Peace
- ✍ Freedom Leadership Foundation
- ✍ Little Angels of Korea Folk Ballet
- ✍ International Conference on United Sciences

The story is told of Dr. Bob Jones III, out of compassion for Korean children, becoming a member of the Advisory Board of the Korean Cultural and Freedom Foundation, Inc. It took Dr. Jones over three months of actually serving on the board to discover it was controlled by the Unification Church. This is the typical manner of operation for the church!<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup>James Bjornstad, *The Moon is Not the Son*, Minneapolis: Dimension Books, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976. Both the list and the example come from p. 22.

## The Writings of / About the Unification Church<sup>155</sup>

By Sun Myung Moon:

*Divine Principle*, Washington, DC: The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973.

*The Divine Principle Study Guide*, Belvedere Tarrytown, NY: The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973.

*New Hope*, Washington, DC, The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1974.

Other Books About The Unification Church:

Young Oon Kim, *The Divine Principle and Its Application*, Belvedere Tarrytown, NY: The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, n.d.

Young Whi Kim, *The Principle of Creation*, Belvedere Tarrytown, NY: The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973.

Young Oon Kim, *Unification Theology & Christian Thought*, New York: Golden Gate Publishing Co., 1975.

*Unification Thought*, NY: Unification Thought Institute, 1973.

*Unification Thought Study Guide*, NY: Unification Thought Institute, 1974.

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<sup>155</sup>James Bjornstad, *The Moon is Not the Son*, Minneapolis: Dimension Books, Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1976, 17.

# Scientology

## Dianetics

It is despicable and utterly beneath contempt to tell a man he must repent, that he is evil.<sup>156</sup>

L. Ron Hubbard

Here comes another cooking recipe. Take gnosticism, convert it to a mind science type approach, like Christian Science, sprinkle with science fiction, and out pops – Scientology and Dianetics!

Or, at least, something close to that.

## History

Lafayette Ronald Hubbard (1911-1986) was a world traveler and author, publishing several works before the second world war, including an extensive amount of science fiction. While working on one of his manuscripts he “discovered” “the common denominator of existence, outlining the theory that *“life is composed of two things: the material universe and an X-factor...that can evidently organize and mobilize the material universe.”*<sup>157</sup>

*Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* (Bridge, Los Angeles, 1950, 1978) was published and has sold over 17 million copies worldwide. In the fall of 1951, Hubbard formed the religious philosophy of Scientology, which is based on his discovery that man is most fundamentally a spiritual being -- the X-factor.<sup>158</sup> The first Church of Scientology was formed in Los Angeles on 1954 by persons other

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<sup>156</sup>Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 349, quoting from L. Ron Hubbard, *Professional Auditor's Bulletin*, #31, a one page flyer.

<sup>157</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org>

<sup>158</sup>Hubbard best explains the differences in *Scientology: The Fundamentals of Thought*, The Church of Scientology of California Publications Organization, Los Angeles, (1973)



than Hubbard. Hubbard created the *Founding Church of Scientology* was founded in Washington, DC, in 1955.

The cult is one which thrives on the lonely, the weak, the confused, the mentally or emotionally unbalanced, and the ineffectual population of the country. The promises offered by dianetics is heady stuff for this insecure group of people. Hope and happiness are offered through Scientology.

Hubbard did his best to have his approach and the “devices” connected with dianetics declared to be of medical value but failed miserably in this. In 1963, the Federal Drug Administration seized the Scientology assets, resulting in a settlement that required labeling of dianetics products as “purely religious.”

In 1993, the Internal Revenue Service of the United States granted full religious recognition and tax exemption to all Scientology Churches, missions and social betterment groups in that country. The Church is also officially recognized in every province in Canada where it has an organization.

L. Ron Hubbard died in 1986, although no one would admit seeing Hubbard since March of 1980.<sup>159</sup> Unlike many emerging religions, the movement survived the transition to new leadership. Mr. David Miscavige, *Chairman of the Board of the Religious Technology Center*, is now the head. The group is one which teachings applied religious philosophy, a philosophy based upon a syncretism of religious concepts and man’s imagination.

## Beliefs

A person is neither mind nor body, but a spiritual being - a soul. "Soul" is an ambiguous term, however. To avoid confusion with other religions, Hubbard turned to his science fiction and selected the word thetan from the Greek letter "theta" which has traditionally meant "thought" or "life". A Thetan is the essence of a person. One does not have a Thetan, one is a Thetan. The brain and the rest of the body are looked upon as a mechanism, a communication center for the Thetan. The mind is perceived as a collection of pictures.

Scientology recognizes **Eight Dynamics**. A "dynamic" is an urge, drive or impulse. Understanding these dynamics help a person gain insight and harmonize all their life activities. The first four dynamics were initially described in *Dianetics*; the remaining four were added with the creation of Scientology.

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<sup>159</sup>Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 346.

- ✍ The First Dynamic is the urge to survive as oneself.
- ✍ The second is the urge to survive through family and sex.
- ✍ The third is to survive in various groups such as a company or with a group of friends
- ✍ The fourth is to survive as mankind.
- ✍ The fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth are the urge to survive through other life forms such as animals, the physical universe, the spiritual universe and Infinity or God respectively.

The entire approach is a bit like the reincarnation cycles of Eastern religions. The human mind is divided into two components: the analytical mind and the reactive mind.

The former resembles Freud's concept of the conscious mind. It senses, remembers, reasons and recalls.

The reactive mind is somewhat similar to Freud's unconscious. It records physically and psychologically disturbing events in this life and prior lives (perceived assaults in the womb, the birth process, assaults, injuries). These disturbances are recorded as engrams forming a psychic scar.

These engrams are considered "the single source of all man's insanities, psychosomatic illnesses and neuroses." They are not sensed by the analytical mind directly but they keep an individual from reaching their full potential. You can see where the emotionally weak person will be attracted to this type of teaching.

The goal is to remove the engrams. There is a level of progression here, similar to the concept of the dynamics discussed above. One moves from preclear (PC) to clear; i.e. totally free of engrams. A person can progress beyond "clear" to becoming a OT or Operating Thetan. An OT is able to leave their body and mind becoming a spirit like being, being able to see, hear and feel without access to normal senses.

Great religious leaders like Buddha and Jesus Christ are regarded as being slightly above "clear".

## Scientology and the Bible

The basic concepts of a biblical God, heaven, and hell are rejected. The goal is to become "clear" through a series of reincarnations.

- ✍ There are gods above all other gods, and gods beyond the gods of the universe.

- ✍ You will find the cross as a symbol all over the universe and the Christ Legend as an implant in preclears a million years ago.
- ✍ Neither Lord Buddha nor Jesus Christ were OTs according to the evidence.
- ✍ Hell is a total myth, an invention just to make people very unhappy and is a vicious lie.<sup>160</sup>

## Practices

Scientology "auditing" is a unique form of personal counseling intended to help an individual look at his own existence and improve their ability to confront what and where they are. It is a precise, thoroughly codified activity with exact procedures.

A Scientology counselor is known as an "Auditor". Auditing is assisted by use of a specially designed meter (E-Meter or Electro-psychometer), a device believed to help locate areas of spiritual distress or travail by measuring the mental state or change of state of the person being audited. It does this by continuously measuring the electrical resistance of the person's body. This is the device that Hubbard attempted to have declared a medical device.

The whole purpose of auditing and training is to graduate individuals to a higher state of spiritual existence or to cross "*The Bridge to Total Freedom*." In other words, the goal is to help travel through the eight dynamics.

Is not the use of the bridge metaphor of a bridge an interesting analogy? ReligiousTolerance.org on this particular point stated that the bridge "has long been used in religious tradition to denote the route across the chasm from where we are now to a higher plateau of existence."

Auditors become ministers, are ordained and wear clerical clothing. However, since Scientology is not an exclusive religion, members are welcomed to retain their church affiliation, if any.

L. Ron Hubbard left a legacy of over 100 non-fiction books and 91 booklets as well as over 6,000 hours of taped lectures. So far over 90 of his works have been translated into 31 different languages and are being distributed in over 120 countries.

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<sup>160</sup>The entire series of bulleted paragraphs are direct quotes from Hubbard as recorded by Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 348, 349.

# Unitarians

## Universalism

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

UU Statement of Principles and Purposes<sup>161</sup>

I want a religion that respects the differences between people and affirms every person as an individual.

I want a church that acts locally and thinks globally on the great issues of our time—world peace; women's rights; racial justice; homelessness; gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights; and protection of the environment.

Quotes from the UU Web site <http://uua.org>

What do Unitarians and Universalists believe? Just about anything, in theory—since they have no requirements of belief—but an exhaustive survey of every fifteenth adult in the denomination shows an emerging doctrine of disbelief.

Less than 3 percent now believe that God is a supernatural being who reveals himself in human history. Just under one-fourth believe God is real but not adequately describable, while 44.2 percent think God is the natural processes in the universe. The debate about Christ also seems to be dying out, with 59 percent no longer considering themselves Christians and a majority believing they know next to nothing about Christ.

As might be expected, Unitarians and Universalists turn out to be individualistic (but with pretty unified liberal views on politics) and have education and income well above the national average.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup>This quote and most information in this chapter comes from <http://www.religioustolerance.org>, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>162</sup>Tan, Paul Lee, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996.

If one were to take the tenets of liberalism and create a church what would it look like?

The answer is Unitarianism.

In 1961 the Unitarian churches and the Universalist Churches merged to form the *Unitarian Universalist Association* (UUA). While the religion is worldwide, the organization is basically an American movement. In 1990, the UUA claimed a membership of about 500,000, although there are no official statistics and other estimates vary, mostly on the lower side. The most interesting feature of these churches is the lack of any complete doctrine or belief, other than, perhaps, the belief that one may believe anything. About one-in-four members claim to be Christian, while others claim to be Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist, neopagan, humanist, agnostic, or atheist. Simple logic would suggest that this cannot truly be a religion.<sup>163</sup>

## Definitional issues

“Unitarian” probably has two different meanings. The first is the belief in a single God, that is, not a Trinity. The second meaning, which has grown out of the first, is that all people are basically good. This leads to the belief that each person is responsible for developing his or her own system of beliefs and ethics.

“Universalism” is similar. At one level, it means a belief that Jehovah is the God of all people, not just the Jewish nation. At a second level, universalism represents the belief that all persons will go to heaven.

With these two very similar definitions, it is easy to see how the two church groups could merge and comfortably become one.

## History

The history of Unitarianism or Universalism is, at best, confused. Some trace the origins to Origen, one of the early church fathers (c. 185-254.). Origen is represented as teaching that God would receive all people into heaven. Then, there is a gap until the years leading into the Reformation. John Hus, who is a forerunner of the Reformers (1372-1415) is viewed as teaching the same type of salvation message.

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<sup>163</sup>Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 501, does not consider the Unitarians to be a Christian cult. He finds them to be completely non-Christian, thus, a “world religion.”

Others see the group known as the Monarchians (middle of the second through the end of the third centuries) as the first Unitarians. The Monarchians denied the Trinity, insisting that God cannot manifest Himself in three Persons. Then in the fourth century Arius came to prominence and effectively taught the same doctrine. As you may recall, it is the controversy with Arius over the divinity of Christ which led to the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed.<sup>164</sup>

The Unitarian Church was actually “formed” in Transylvania (1638). The group moved to England, and then, eventually to the U.S. The first true American universalist organization was formed in 1785 as the Universalist Church of America. The first Unitarian group in the country was formed around 1825 as the American Unitarian Association.

The leaders in America were Jonathan Mayhew and Charles Chauncey, who were involved in the operation of Harvard. They helped to move Harvard away from its Christian foundations. Others see Horace Bushnell (1802-1876) as the driving force behind the movement. Ralph Waldo Emerson is also seen as one of the movement’s mainstays.

Other famous Americans claimed by the Unitarians include Alcott, Bryant, Holmes, Locke, Milton, Newton, Florence Nightingale, Thoreau, John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Adlai Stevenson and William Howard Taft. The group also claims Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, and women’s right activist, Susan B. Anthony.

## Beliefs

- ▶ Each person, because of her/his humanity inherently has dignity and worth.
- ▶ Each person seeks his/her unique spiritual path, based upon their personal life experience, the use of reason and meditation, the findings of science and her/his fundamental beliefs concerning deity, humanity, and the rest of the universe.
- ▶ The prime function of a clergy person and congregation is to help the individual members to grow spiritually.
- ▶ All the great religions of the world, and their sacred texts, have worth.
- ▶ There should be no barrier to membership, such as compulsory adherence to a creed.

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<sup>164</sup>Fritz Ridenour, *So What’s the Difference?*, Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, 1967, 119. Irvine (*Heresies Exposed*, 196) also agrees the Unitarians are the outgrowth of the Arians. Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, finds Cellarium, a contemporary of Luther, to be the first Unitarian.

- ▶ Their lives, their congregations and association are governed by the concepts of democracy, religious freedom and religious tolerance.
- ▶ Much of their effort should be directed towards civil rights, achieving equality of treatment for everyone regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. They have played a major role in these battles for equal rights, in spite of their relatively small numbers.

Unitarians deny the doctrine of the Trinity by teaching that there is only one Uni-personal God, not the Christ nor the Holy Spirit. In fact, they may well teach that to worship Christ is idolatry.<sup>165</sup> As generally indicated above, the group places the Bible on the same level as the writings of Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and similar religious books.

It is easy to see the comparison of Unitarianism and liberalism. Both hold the same beliefs about God. Unitarianism is an organized version of humanism, and nothing more. To quote Walter Martin,

Unitarianism is a product of the deification of Reason, the rejection of Biblical authority and an indescribably fierce pride in one's ability to save himself from the awful penalty of sin. It is one thing for Unitarianism to exercise its prerogative of denial where the foundations of Christianity are involved. But it is quite another to use the Christian Scriptures and abuse numerous contexts therein in order to implement such denials. This is why not a few Christians thinkers have been led to observe that while Unitarianism may be a religion which attempts to exalt reason and rationalism, it is one in which logical consistency is conspicuously absent.<sup>166</sup>

Indeed, in the newest edition of *Kingdom of the Cults* edited by Hank Hanegraaff, the Unitarians are referred to as the "one stop spiritual supermarket."<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 193.

<sup>166</sup>Water Marin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, 506.

<sup>167</sup>Walter Martin, Hank Hanegraaff, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa., Appendix E.

## Universalism in Christianity

As noted, the general concept of universalism is that God will ultimately bring all people to salvation. Some go so far as teaching that this includes Satan and the fallen angels (demons). The scary part of this definition is that it has found its way into some truly “Christian” groups. These groups view the God of the Bible as being one of love and see salvation as being delivered from eternal punishment, not from sin. Salvation is not from hell, but from sin. There are two main camps in Christian Universalism:<sup>168</sup>

- ✍ Those who teach that the unrepentant will be punished in a future state, and that their punishment will be proportional to the degree of sin committed in the mortal state. They generally hold that the punishment is moral and not physical. There is no hell. They do not maintain that salvation is merited through these sufferings.
- ✍ Those who teach that all the punishment for sin occurs in this life and that God's discipline in our lives is for the purpose of purifying us, though this purification is not our merit for salvation. In eternity, there will be a loss of reward for those who did not trust in Christ in this lifetime.

On paper these groups apply the right words for their statement of faith, but a close reading will show that their Jesus is a manifestation, an image, a representation of God's essence, not One who is equal to the Father in essence. This leads to the conclusion that the Cross and Resurrection were not real. Jesus was spiritually, not physically, raised from the dead.

Unitarianism and Universalism, as a church, are clearly a cult, even by their own definitions. The real question for all these and all others is the same as Christ asked Peter . . . “Who do people say that I am?”

Those Christians who believe in universalism fail to properly answer this question.

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<sup>168</sup>Material for this page comes from <http://www.carm.org>



# Judaism

## Genesis 12:1-3

*Now the LORD had said to Abram: 1 “Get out of your country, From your family And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

## Genesis 18:10

*And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.”*

## John 4:22

*You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.*

The Christian religion claims its roots in the history of Judaism. God came to Abraham and, dealing through him, created the nation of Israel. Abraham’s son of Sarah was Isaac. Isaac gave birth to Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. Indeed, God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, a word which means “he strives with God.”<sup>169</sup>

The early prophecies show that God’s chosen would come from the house of Judah (Gen 49:10).<sup>170</sup> Over time, David came from this lineage. And, over some more time, Jesus came from the house of David, of the house of Judah. Indeed, all of Israel traces its roots to their “father Abraham” (cf. Acts 7:2; John 8:53). Jesus was the

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<sup>169</sup>Others see the meaning as “prince of God” or “God strives.” The given meaning seems closer to the probable Hebrew and accurately describes both Jacob and the Nation of Israel.

<sup>170</sup>**Genesis 49:10:** *The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.*

Messiah of Israel, and He came to bring salvation to all people. Salvation is truly of the Jewish race and nation.

The Old Testament so loved by Christians is nothing more than the Jewish Scriptures. While during the early years of the church, the actual structure of the Old Testament and the Jewish scriptures would have looked different, today they are virtually identical in structure.

And, is the nation of Israel a religion, a race, or, simply a nation? Clearly, it is a combination of a race and a religion, and the Old Testament shows the two are closely intertwined.

## Cult?

Under our definitions, Judaism should not be considered a cult, for the Jews clearly do not claim to be Christian. They are our transition to world religions. While the Jews do not accept Jesus as the Messiah, they acknowledge His presence in history and the world. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century even mentions Him.

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; (64) and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.<sup>171</sup>

So, it is clear that world religions, upon being asked the same questions about essential doctrine, will produce very different answers. Indeed, they clearly will not see Jesus as God. They may or may not believe He was crucified. Most, but not all, will not believe He was resurrected from the dead. Salvation will become many different things, with good works and deeds leading the list.

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<sup>171</sup>Josephus, Flavius, *The Works of Josephus*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1997. As, indeed, does Philo (20 B.C. - A.D. 50), a Greek-Roman historian living in Alexandria, Egypt, writing Jewish history about the same time. He was known as Philo the Jew.

## Why Did The Jews Reject Jesus?

The Jewish nation clearly looked forward to the coming Messiah.<sup>172</sup> The Rabbis found some 456 references to Messiah in the Old Testament, many of them “visual” not verbal. Ancient Rabbinic literature has more than 558 references. The Jews looked forward to the Messiah. But, who is this Messiah they were looking for?

There really are two problems with the Jewish outlook of Messiah. First, they seem to have misread their own Scriptures and failed to comprehend the Servant nation of the Christ. As such, they continually equated the Kingdom/King passages as coming simultaneous with any Servant passage. Effectively, they failed to take the Servant aspect into account. Their Messiah was a great King, with a sword in hand, riding a swift mount, ready to drive the enemy away and establish Israel as the great nation of the world.

Israel also fails to understand sin and salvation. “All that Israel needed: ‘study of the Law and good works,’ lay within the reach of everyone; and all that Israel hoped for, was national restoration and glory. Everything else was but means to these ends; the Messiah Himself only the grand instrument in attaining them. Thus, the picture presented would be of Israel’s exaltation, rather than of the salvation of the world. . . . But in such a picture there would be neither room nor occasion for a Messiah-Saviour, in the only sense in which such a heavenly mission could be rational, or the heart of humanity respond to it.”<sup>173</sup>

It is easy to take this picture of Judaism and carry it into the New Testament. One sees why the Messiah was rejected. Jesus failed to match the vision of man!

## Judaism Today

Sadly, little has changed over the past 2,000 years. The world of the Jews took a severe and devastating blow in the 60s (and I do not mean the 1960s!). In response to guerrilla warfare tactics of Jews dissidents, the Roman army under Titus declared “enough was enough.” The army marched on Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple while burning a part of the City in A.D. 70. Many Jews fled the country in the face of this persecution. The land of Israel ceased to exist as any form of a nation.

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<sup>172</sup>“Messiah” means “anointed” and is Hebrew. “Christ” is the Greek word meaning anointed. The two terms are biblically interchangeable.

<sup>173</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, New Updated Edition, Complete and Unabridged in One Volume, nc: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, originally published 1883, Book 2, 115.

History had prepared the Jews for this moment. God had earlier sent the nation into exile for its disobedience. The Old Testament book of 2 Kings details the carrying of the Northern kingdom into captivity by the Assyrians and the Southern kingdom by the Babylonians. Jeremiah lived through this latter event and prophesied the return of the Nation to the land. Ezra and Nehemiah tell the story of the return and the rebuilding of the Temple. History after that is “iffy” from the Jewish perspective. Palestine became the battle ground for various forces. Many conquerors treat the Israelites well. Others not so well.

But, during the captivity the concept of the synagogue apparently arose. The sacrifices required by the Temple law were “converted” into sacrifices of work and obedience to the Law. These works were structured in the concepts of ritual, prayer, and study of the Law. This would lead to a moral life committed to the Law. Ten Jewish men could form a synagogue. At the time of the Babylonian captivity, many Jews had fled to Egypt, rather than face the Babylonians. Egypt, especially the area around Alexandria, developed a large Jewish population. Many Jews elected to remain in Assyria and Babylon following Cyrus’s decree allowing their return. The structure was in place both to support and to provide the pattern for the final dispersion.

Titus drove the Jewish population from Rome. Judaism spread across the world. When persecution drove Christians from Palestine, the Christians took their Gospel message of salvation and built the Church. Contrary to this, the Jews stayed to themselves, maintaining a distinctness and an almost hatred on the part of the host countries. This hatred is not consistent, but is ever present, even down to this century.<sup>174</sup>

## Beliefs

Little has changed in Judaism since the time of Moses, and, yet, much has changed. The synagogues have replaced the Tabernacle. The Temple does not exist. The Jews still see themselves as God’s uniquely chosen people. In the time of Jesus, Judaism had two ruling “parties,” the Sadducees, who came from the rich and constituted the body from which the high priests were drawn, and the Pharisees, the representatives of the common people. Out of the Pharisees came the scribes, the lawyers of the law. The Sadducees held some beliefs differently from the Pharisees. In other words, Judaism was not a united body.

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<sup>174</sup>The Jewish people became official occupants of Palestine in 1948. This is seen by many Christians as one of the necessary closing steps in the movement toward the Rapture, Tribulation, and entrance of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ portrayed in Scripture.

Today is no different. Judaism may be broken down into three groups: conservative, orthodox, and reform. What has not changed is that Judaism is built around the Old Testament in general, and the Pentateuch in particular. The Law or Torah is the heart of Judaism, and one's views toward the Law determine where one sides in the modern break down of Judaism.

The Orthodox Jews are the true ancestors of the Pharisees. They follow the Torah and give little use to the balance of the Old Testament. In addition, the Orthodox Jew observes the traditions and interpretations handed down by prior generations. In this sense, the Orthodox Jew is the ancestor of the scribes and Pharisees, studying the Law to assure they are in compliance.

In about A.D. 200, the traditions and teachings of the scribes were committed to writing in what is now known as the Mishnah. The Mishnah contains the "way to walk," known as the Halakah. The Mishnah was expanded upon about A.D. 500 with the compilation of the Talmud. The Talmud includes the entire Old Testament plus all of the commentaries or interpretations thereon, including the Mishnah. These three volumes – Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud – rule every aspect of the Orthodox Jew's life.<sup>175</sup> This includes the dietary laws, for example, which forbid the eating of pork. This group is extremely observant of the Sabbath and will not travel or work on the Sabbath.

In the twelfth century, a Spanish Jewish philosopher, Maimonides developed a creed which is still the basis for beliefs of the Orthodox Jew. The creed taught the omnipotence, omniscience, eternality, and oneness of God, emphasizing He is the only One entitled to worship.<sup>176</sup> God is an invisible spirit, Creator, and Source of Life. Moses is seen as the greatest prophet and the Law as the highest revelation. Maimonides' philosophy was built around a series of punishments and rewards, the coming of the Messiah, and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>177</sup>

Conservative Jews are more lenient than the Orthodox group. While committed to the Torah and tradition, they are less observant of many of the fine details of interpretation observed by the Orthodox Jews. One of their prime concerns is keeping alive the Hebrew language. This group is the intermediate version of Judaism. The Law is generally observed, but carefully reinterpreted to make it relevant for the modern culture and thought.

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<sup>175</sup>Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?*, Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, a division of G/L Publications, 1967, 71.

<sup>176</sup>The creed contains 13 basic beliefs and is set out in full in Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, CA:, Campus Crusade for Christ, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983, 367.

<sup>177</sup>Black flowing cloaks, long beards, and full black hats trademark the ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jewish movement. These are the conservatives of the conservatives.

The Reform Jews are the liberals or reformers of Judaism. Their approach is to believe in the “principles” of Judaism more than the practice. They generally do not observe the dietary laws nor do they fret over the concept of work or travel on the Sabbath. This group is driven by a desire to fit Judaism into modern society. Doctrine is spiritualized and only the ethical system remains. The Sabbath has even been moved to Sunday!

All three groups do, to one degree or another, observe the Sabbath and the high holy or feast days. This includes Rosh Hashana (Jewish New Year) followed by ten days of penitence ending with Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, and Passover. Most also observe Purim celebrating Esther’s saving of the Jewish nation in exile from the evil Haman. The Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and the non-biblical holiday of Hanukkah (Feast of Lights), which highlights the cleansing of the Temple by the Maccabees after they had defeated Antiochus Epiphanes and recaptured Jerusalem from the Syrians around B.C. 167, are also celebrated.<sup>178</sup>

## Beliefs that Divide

While there is seemingly only one true difference between Jew and Christian, there is a vast degree of difference of views on many topics.

The Jews do not see Jesus as Messiah. The Jews clearly hold to the concept of only one God, but in practice, this view point denies the existence of any Trinity, for Messiah is not truly seen as God and the Holy Spirit is not a Person/manifestation of God.

The Jews do not believe in original sin. They see man as “born free, with the capacity to choose between good and evil. Each man is accountable for himself.”<sup>179</sup> A failure to accept original sin translates into the ability of man to keep the Law.

Salvation is acceptance of God. The Jew views His promises as being here on earth and does not stress the afterlife. Anyone may find this salvation through commitment

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<sup>178</sup>Judaism also has its mystics. This esoteric school is known as the Kabbalah (also spelled Cabala, Cabbalah, or Cabala). This is really a pantheistic system which seeks a mystical experience on oneness with the cosmic universe. Kabbalah means “reception,” thus, “tradition,” but not the social/legalistic traditions of Orthodox Judaism. These are the teachings of the metaphysical and are the result of the “secret religious doctrines.” The more practical followers of the Kabbalah use magic in the ceremonies. The Kabbalah is not properly a single book, but is rather a series of doctrines. The Kabbalah contains hints of gnosticism and sees the existence of female deity. For a fuller, still brief description of the Kabbalah, see Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990, 173.

<sup>179</sup>Ridenour, *So What’s the Difference?*, 80.

to the one true God and by living a moral life in obedience to the Torah. This approach does not require the need for repentance or redemption. Since one is born a Jew and is not born into original sin, there is no repentance needed. Since man does not need a savior, this makes the Messiah a political hero and social deliverer.

# Islam

## Genesis 16:4, 11, 12; 17:20

*16:4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. . . 11 And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name **Ishmael**, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. 12 He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." 17:20 "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation."*

Recite, in the name of the Lord who has created,  
Created man from clots of blood,  
Recite, seeing that the Lord is the most generous,  
Who has taught by the pen,  
Taught man what he did not know.

The words the angel gave to  
Mohammed<sup>180</sup>

"There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is the prophet (or messenger) of Allah"<sup>181</sup>

The great *Shahada*,  
the confession of Islam

Just as the child of the promise, Isaac, brought forth the twelve tribes of Israel, so Abraham's son of the flesh, Ishmael, was a great father of nations. Although sitting

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<sup>180</sup>As quoted in Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?*, Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, a division of G/L Publications, 1967, 82.

<sup>181</sup>Walter Martin, Hank Hanegraaff, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa., Appendix D.



here 4,000 years later it is difficult to be completely dogmatic about the facts, for all practical purposes, the entire world of the Arabs came from the loins of Ishmael.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, in conversations with Muslims, I have been personally told that it was Ishmael whom God directed Abraham to sacrifice, not Isaac (Gen 22)!

In the last fifty years, Islam has been the fastest growing religion in the world. As we recited in the opening chapters, Islam has the third largest presences of significant communities in the world. At the same time, with a total membership claim of close to a billion people, Islam is the world's second largest religion.<sup>183</sup> Islam is a religion of nations and governments. It was the cause of the Crusades of ancient history. For many, it conjures up the thoughts of modern terrorism. It is clearly a religious force to be dealt with.

The early Arabs were polytheistic in religious orientation. They worshiped many gods, of whom the highest was Allah. The religion was very pagan in nature, including gods of nature and people, with the gods being both male and female. It is against these polytheistic gods that Mohammed revolted. Mecca was the center of polytheistic worship. The town boasted some 360 shrines as well as a small temple which housed the Black Stone. The stone was thought to have been given to Abraham by the Angel (*djinn*) Gabriel. Most likely, the stone is a meteorite.

## History

As with the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and others, the Islamic religion owes its origins and its sacred book to one man – Mohammed. Born in Mecca in about A.D. 570, Mohammed's birth name was Ubu'l Kassim. His father died shortly after his birth and his mother died when he was six. He was raised, ultimately, by his uncle. Mohammed became a camel driver on caravans, a profession resulting in contact with many peoples and religions. At the age of 25, Mohammed married his employer, a wealthy widow 15 years his senior. Although not particularly relevant to the development of the religion, none of the couples children survived to adulthood, with the exception of one daughter, Fatima.

As the husband of a wealthy entrepreneur, Mohammed no longer worked on the caravans and, thus, devoted himself to meditation on the meaning and purpose of life. Mohammed's reflections brought him to a dislike of the polytheistic nature of the Arab religion. Mohammed arrived at the conclusion Allah was the one true God. He spent much of his time meditating in caves, particularly one on Mount Hira located a

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<sup>182</sup>The word *Arab* refers to nomads or bedouins and may be connected with the word for desert or wilderness.

<sup>183</sup>Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, STEP electronic edition, Appendix D.

few miles from Mecca.<sup>184</sup> Beginning in A.D. 610 and continuing to his death in 632, Mohammed “received” visions from Allah which were accompanied by violent seizures. At the urging of his wife, Mohammed submitted to the revelations and determined they were being brought to him by Gabriel. The angel’s instructions to Mohammed were to recite the words he received to others. After his death, his followers recorded these revelations in the Qur’an (“Recitation”).<sup>185</sup> Arguably, “next to the Bible, it is the most esteemed and most powerful book in the world.”<sup>186</sup>

Mohammed’s new religion did not quickly catch on. It was contrary to the entire social and moral order of Mecca, and, most likely, had an adverse effect upon the economics of the region. Persecution followed and many of Mohammed’s followers moved to a nearby city called Yathrib. On July 16, 622, Mohammed barely managed to escape an assassination plot, and he, too, fled to Yathrib. This escape is called the Hegira (*Hijrah* or flight). This date is considered the official date of the formation of Islam.

Mohammed became the leader of Yathrib and the city’s name was changed to Medina, meaning the “City of the Prophet.” Mohammed established a theocracy in Median, developing his interrelationship between politics and religion. He also started a harem with some 10-to-12 wives. Mohammed attempted to win the Jewish population of Medina and upon failing in this effort, he turned to persecuting the Jews.

Mohammed helped to finance his government by attacking and plundering caravans going to or from Mecca. This led to continual warfare with Mecca, a warfare Mohammed won. He entered Mecca and destroyed the idols, but kept the temple of Kaaba which housed the Black Stone. Mohammed made Mecca the most holy city of Islam and the Black Stone became the focal point of worship. When the Muslims of today pray, they pray to the Kaaba.

The successors to Mohammed are called *caliph*. It is under the second, third, and fourth *caliphs* that Islam’s reach was spread, via battles and conquests. During this time period, Islam spread to Syria, Jerusalem, Egypt, Persia, Mesopotamia, India, north Africa, and a part of Europe. The defeat of the Islamic armies by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in A.D. 732 stopped the spread in Europe.

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<sup>184</sup>Mecca is located on the southwest corner of the Arabian Peninsula, in what is now Saudi Arabia.

<sup>185</sup>A variant or English spelling is Koran. There are also variant spellings of Mohammed’s name and of the word Muslim.

<sup>186</sup>John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *The Facts on Islam*, The Anker Series, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1991, 1998, 5, quoting Dr. J. Christy Wilson of Princeton University.

## Beliefs

Islam properly means “surrender” or “submission,” to the will of Allah. A Muslim is “one who submits.” Therefore, Islam is properly the name of the religion and Muslim is the name of a follower of Islam. Islam is intensely monotheistic, believing that the great sin is one of associating Allah with anything created. While Islam combines elements from both the Old and New Testaments, it is based upon a religion developed by Mohammed, the “last and greatest of the prophets.” Islam is viewed by its followers as the true continuation of the Old Testament faith.

The Qur’an is about 4/5ths the length of the New Testament and is divided into 114 chapters called surahs. Parts appear to have actually been written by Mohammed with the balance written by his followers. The surahs are ordered by length from the longest to the shortest. The Qur’an is supplemented by a collection of Mohammed’s sayings gathered over the years in the *Hadith* (“tradition”). The sayings are called the *sunna* (“custom”).

The beliefs and practices of Islam are set forth and summarized in the Five Doctrines and the Five Pillars (although there are really six of each).

## The Five Doctrines

- ✍ Allah is the one true God. Since the Christian concept of the Trinity denotes three and not one, this view is heretical to Islam. Allah is omnipotent, omniscient, and transcendent (above all). In fact he is so transcendent, that he is virtually unknowable.
- ✍ Allah has sent many prophets. Twenty-eight of the prophets are named in the Qur’an. Most of these prophets come from the pages of the Old and New Testament. Jesus is recognized as the prophet of His time and as sinless. As mentioned above, Mohammed is the last and the greatest prophet.
- ✍ The Qur’an is the most important inspired book, but there are three others. These are the Taureat (the Pentateuch of Moses), the Zabur (Psalms of David), and the Injil (Evangel of Jesus). While Christians are, thus, recognized as “people of the book,” the book was corrupted and the Qur’an supersedes the Bible. The Qur’an is eternal. It was simply dictated to Mohammed by Gabriel over a period of time. On the whole, the Islamic world is against translating the Qur’an into other languages than Arabic. As such, there are no authoritative translations, although there are some fine English translations available.
- ✍ Angels serve as intermediaries between Allah and man. There are evil angels as well (*djinnns*). Satan is the ruler of the *djinnns*. He is known as *Iblis* or *Sahitan*.

- ✍ There will be a judgment day, the last days. Heaven and hell are the destinations and man gets to one or the other by his works. The works are weighed in a pair of balances. Muslims admit that they will not know whether they are going to heaven or hell, until they stand at the heavenly doorway and watch their works being weighed.
- ✍ The sixth doctrine is that of Kismet. Kismet means “fate.” This brings a fatalistic view to the religion.

## The Five Pillars

- ✍ Recitation of the *Shadaha*. The creed is recited aloud, publically and with conviction. It is repeated several times a day.
- ✍ The practice of prayer (*salat*). Five times a day the prayer is recited – upon rising, at noon, in the midafternoon, after sunset, and before retiring. There are prescribed prayers to be said on each occasion. As mentioned above, the prayers are said while facing the Kaaba in Mecca. The Hadith requires a mechanical recitation of these prayers, dictating the series of procedures – standing, kneeling, hands and face on the ground, in a particular sequence. Muslims are called to prayer by the *muezzin* (crier).
- ✍ The practice of almsgiving (*zakat*). This is, effectively, a tax equal to 1/40th of the Muslim’s income and holdings. The alms are used to support the vagrant population of Muslim countries.
- ✍ The month of fasting (*Ramadan*). The fast is from sun rise to sun set and applies both to food and drink. In practice, most Muslims load up on a very early breakfast, as well as a very late dinner.
- ✍ The pilgrimage to Mecca (*Haji*). A Muslim must make one trip to Mecca during his life time and perform a series of rituals and ceremonies, many of which center around the Kaaba. The trip helps in “salvation.”
- ✍ The sixth pillar is the Holy War, the *Jihad*. This is the force used to overcome the world. It is sanctioned by the Qur’an and a soldier killed in such a war is assured an entrance to heaven.

Other practices include the veiling of women and the abstention of alcohol, gambling, and certain foods, especially pork. Polygamy is still practiced, but a man is limited to four wives by the Qur’an and *Hadith*, because each wife must be treated equally. There are also a number of feasts and festivals which are practiced, although this varies by sect.

## Sects

The sects of Islam developed primarily over a dispute on the method of choosing the successor to Mohammed.

The Sunnites or Sunnis are the largest sect, with the major Islamic countries being 90%+ Sunni. This group believes the true line of succession was with the *caliphs*.

The Shiites are the other major sect, believing that the succession remained with Mohammed's family. This succession is known as the Imams.<sup>187</sup> The Shiites are divided over whether there were seven or twelve sinless successors. The Shiites are much more literal in their interpretation and application of the Qur'an and are much more militant than the Sunnites.

The Sufis are the mystics of Islam. They emphasize more esoteric practices and have developed a series of secret rites and rituals. Estimates place the total number of Sufis at around one million.

The Ahmadiyahs were founded in the 1890s. They are the apologetic arm of Islam. They are highly visible and very active on American university campuses. The estimates place between five and eight million Ahmadiyahs in America, almost all of them being Sunnis.<sup>188</sup>

## The Qur'an and the Bible

As has been clearly indicated, much of the Qur'an comes from or is based upon the Bible. Indeed, Muslims are taught to believe both. However, the Qur'an is the predefined word of God, so if there is a conflict, the Qur'an controls. There are, of course, major differences between the two, some of which have been previously noted. A couple of others should be mentioned as well.

- ✍ The Qur'an denies the deity of Jesus (Surah 4:171).
- ✍ The Qur'an denies that Christ died on the Cross (Surah 4:157).
- ✍ Man must take care of his own sins (Surah 4:111).
- ✍ Sin is the failure to do the will of Allah. The will of Allah is contained in the Five Pillars of Islam. Salvation is the equivalent of obtaining heaven rather

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<sup>187</sup>Today, an Imam is a trained teacher/congregational leader of the Sunnis. Imam means "faith." An *Ayatollah* refers to a spiritual master or leader in Shiite Islam. Iran is primarily Shiite.

<sup>188</sup>Statistical information from Ankerberg, *The Facts on Islam*, 6.

than going to hell. Forgiveness is conditioned on both Allah's mercy and good works.

- ✍ Allah is the direct author of both good and bad.
- ✍ The concept of faith, as known in the Bible, does not exist in the Qur'an.
- ✍ Islam does not consider the New Testament Gospels to be the Word of Jesus, because they are words about Jesus.

## Sharing Your Faith

In discussions with a Muslim, ultimately the topics of concern are the nature of God, the Person and Deity of Christ, and the issue of salvation by grace versus works. The main problem is that Islam is really a religion of logic rather than faith. The Muslim has no concept of the Christian meaning of faith. They would almost rather look to the Encyclopedia Britannica than to the Qur'an or Bible. You cannot win an argument with a Muslim. The concept of a personal God is foreign to them. Since they view Jesus as a prophet, they have a built-in defense against the Gospel message. To evangelize a Muslim will take a lot of seed planting and a lot of watering – and you must allow for plenty of time for the seed to grow!

## Black Muslims

A word needs to be said about the Black Muslim groups, the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple of America. Both of these groups are, effectively, radical Black groups of America and are not recognized by true Sunnis as members of the Islamic religion.

The Nation of Islam is, by far, the larger of the two groups. Depending upon whose statistics are used, the Nation of Islam has a membership of 200,000. History shows, however, that the roots of the Nation of Islam flow from the Moorish Science Temple of America.<sup>189</sup> At the death of the founder of the Moorish Science Temple, two groups fought for control. One of these groups was led by Wallace D. Fard (or Farad) in Detroit. Fard changed his last name to Muhammad and claimed to have made the pilgrimage to Mecca. Using the Bible, the Qur'an, and his own books, Fard taught that eventually Asians (non-Whites) and Whites would fight it out in the battle of Armageddon.

Fard left the Nation after being arrested in 1933, and was succeeded by Elijah Muhammad (Elijah Poole, 1898–1975). Elijah Muhammad also wrote and helped to structure the Nation of Islam in its current form. The official history of the Nation of Islam includes the following description of the origin of Muhammad's ministry:

For 3 ½ years He taught and trained the Honorable Elijah Muhammad night and day into the profound Secret Wisdom of the Reality of God, which included the hidden knowledge of the original people who were the first founders of civilization of our Planet and who had a full knowledge of the Universal Order of Things from the beginning of Divine Creation. Upon the Master's departure in 1934, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad labored tirelessly to bring life to his mentally and spiritually dead people until his return to the Master in 1975. The Honorable Elijah Muhammad identified the Master as being the answer to the one that the world had been expecting for the past 2,000 years under the names Messiah, the second coming of Jesus, the Christ, Jehovah, God, and the Son of Man. When the Honorable Elijah Muhammad asked Him to identify Himself He replied that He was the Mahdi. He signed His name in 1933 as Master Wallace Fard Muhammad to express the meaning of One Who had come in the Early Morning Dawn of the New Millennium to lay the base for a New World Order of Peace and Righteousness on the foundation of Truth

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<sup>189</sup>Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, STEP electronic edition, Appendix D. Neither group presents the history in the fashion set forth by Martin.

and Justice; to put down tyrants and to change the world into a Heaven on Earth.<sup>190</sup>

Muhammad's prize pupil and speaker for the Nation was Malcolm X (Malcolm Little, 1929–1965). Malcolm X withdrew from the Nation and its membership declined from a high of about 300,000. The assassination of Malcolm X occurred after he had left the Nation of Islam and changed his name once again. Upon the death of Elijah Muhammad, Muhammad's son took over leadership of the Nation. The new leader changed the theology of the Nation away from the racist positions of Fard to an almost conservative Islamic position. To maintain the relationship with the past, the teachings of Elijah Muhammad were called metaphorical.

In 1977 a group led by Louis Farrakhan broke away and began to return to the preaching of Elijah Muhammad. Consider the following description of Farrakhan as given by Hanegraaff:

Farrakhan is a charismatic speaker who has appeared on television numerous times, is a sought-after speaker by African-American university student groups, and publishes his beliefs and opinions in *The Final Call*. He is also well known for his hatred of whites and Jews, and was accused by Malcolm X's widow of involvement in the assassination of her late husband. In 1984 he denounced Judaism as "a gutter religion" and referred to Adolf Hitler as a "wickedly great man." In 1993 he tried to sell the public a softer image of himself by reaching out to politically mainstream and "progressive" African-Americans and being involved in a national summit of black political leaders, including many from the Black Congressional Caucus. He even had dinner with a rabbi.

Despite his attempts to reach out, he agreed with the "truths" spoken by his then spokesman, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, at Kean College, New Jersey, on November 29, 1993. In the speech, Muhammad called the Pope a "cracker" and referred to Jews as "bloodsuckers" who are in a conspiracy to control the finances of the world. They even control the presidency of the United States regardless of who is in office. Farrakhan followed up Muhammad's speech with rhetoric of his own condemning whites and Jews. Despite all this, a 1994 poll showed that 63 percent of African-Americans believe Farrakhan speaks the truth, and a New York Times survey reports that over one-third of African-Americans polled "express a favorable view" of him. The most recent publicity event, the "Million Man March" on Washington D.C., although it did not draw the number of participants anticipated, did

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<sup>190</sup><http://www.noi.org/history.html>.



demonstrate Farrakhan's ability to convince many Christian leaders (especially African-American leaders) that he is a peace-loving man who is no more prejudiced or intolerant than any Christian.

This kind of rhetoric is consistent with the historical beliefs of the Nation. They believe in a sort of Platonic idealism or quasi-pantheistic dualism that teaches that all members of the Nation are God, but that Allah is incarnate only in Wallace Fard Muhammad, who is also the Mahdi and the Messiah. Not only that, but God was at one time a scientist who wanted to create a single language on the earth, but was unable to do so. After failing in doing this, he decided to destroy the earth, only succeeding in causing the moon to separate from the earth 66 trillion years ago. This is something clearly condemned by the Qur'an, which in innumerable places teaches that God is One. But like orthodox Islam, they reject the Christian concept of God as a Spirit, or to use their word, a "spook."

However, if "all Black Muslims are Allah, and Allah is incarnate as Wallace Fard Muhammad" is their doctrine, why have Asians—especially blacks (according to them)—made mistakes like anyone else? Is Allah "All-knowing" or not? If Black Muslims are Allah, how could they be deceived by the devil? If Allah can be deceived, why trust him? Why trust the writings of Wallace Fard Muhammad, Elijah Muhammad, Louis Farrakhan, the Qur'an, or the Bible, when they might be full of errors as well? If I am Allah, how can I trust myself? Ultimately we are left with a radical form of agnosticism and skepticism.<sup>191</sup>

Christianity is seen as the white man's religion. Despite his softened outreach, the Nation is still a radical group which promotes the economic and social position of the Black community, as defined by Farrakhan. Farrakhan quotes from both the Qur'an and the Bible, resulting in a theology that is neither. Salvation is still by works, but it is unclear what any other real beliefs are taught.

And, what of the Moorish Science Temple of America? The Temple was founded in Newark, New Jersey, in 1913 by B. Timothy Drew (Noble Drew Ali, 1866–1929). A black North Carolinian, Drew claimed a commission from the king of Morocco to spread Islam in the United States.<sup>192</sup> However, Drew held to a view of Islam that

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<sup>191</sup>Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, STEP electronic edition, Appendix D.

<sup>192</sup>A semi-official WEB site of the Moorish Science Temple states that Drew Ali was raised by Cherokee Indians, became a circus magician, and in that capacity traveled to Egypt where he learned not only the Qur'an, but High Magic and much higher truths. See <http://www.deoxy.org/moorish.htm>.

avoided African ancestral teachings. Instead, he taught that all non-whites are Asians. Christianity is the white Europeans' religion, and Islam is for the Asian, or more specifically, the Moor (Black Asians). Drew reduced his theology to writing in a book called the Qur'an or Koran. This is not the Qur'an of Islam, but is a much smaller book that, upon reading, is a mix of Bible, Qur'an, Eastern mysticism, and big city "street" theology.

Upon Drew's death, the Temple split between its Chicago and Detroit leaders.<sup>193</sup> The Detroit leader, as we have seen, was Fard, who started the Nation of Islam. The Chicago leader was John Givens El. His followers maintained the teachings of Drew Ali. The Moorish Science Temple of America is also a racist religion which teaches the white man is the devil and that Blacks shall overtake the world.

The Five Pillars of the Moorish Science Temple are:

- ✍ Love
- ✍ Truth
- ✍ Peace
- ✍ Freedom
- ✍ Justice
- ✍ With beauty being added as a sixth pillar.<sup>194</sup>

Both the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple has strong followings in jails and prisons, although this is not the sole location of their membership.

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<sup>193</sup>The aforementioned WEB site says that one off-shot at Drew Ali's death was that of Elijah Muhammad, who taught a "pseudo-science of race hatred."

<sup>194</sup><http://www.deoxy.org/moorish.htm>

## Baha'i

The best beloved of all things in my sight is justice.  
The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.  
The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable  
unless and until its unity is firmly established.<sup>195</sup>

The only difference between members of the human family is that of  
degree. . . Some are like the sick and must be treated with tenderness  
and care. None are bad or evil.

*The Wisdom of Abdul Baha*<sup>196</sup>

Just as Christianity spawns break-away groups, so, too, as we have seen, do the break-away groups themselves. Consider the overall biblical record and history. Man broke from God. Ultimately with the flood, God “started over.” The almost immediate result, at least, in biblical terms, was the Tower of Babel (Gen 11). Thereafter, God changed His method of revelation and went solely to Abraham and worked through the patriarch and his family to produce the Jewish nation. The history of the Jewish nation is one of many cults and break-away groups. Indeed, five-sixths of the tribes left! But, out of this nation comes Christ and His church. Then came the cults!

But, back up a few thousand years. Remember Abraham? He and his wife, Sarah could not wait to “get started.” So, Sarah (then known as Sarai) gave Abraham (who was still Abram) her handmaid Hagar. Out of that union came Ishmael. From Ishmael came most of the Arab nations. And, as we have just witnessed, from the Arab nations came Islam.

And, not to feel left out, from Islam comes a few other religious groups. We have already considered two of these, the Nation of Islam and the Moorish Science Temple of America. By far, though, the biggest Islamic cult is Baha'i, a religion claiming about 6 million members. It is a religion, which according to the *1992 Encyclopaedia*

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<sup>195</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org/bahai.htm>

<sup>196</sup>Walter Martin, *Rise of the Cults*, Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1955, 1977,

*Britannica Book of the Year* has the second largest worldwide collection of “significant communities,” second only to Christianity.<sup>197</sup>

## History

Baha’i commenced in Iran in 1844 at the hands of Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad (1819-1850). Siyyid claimed the title Bab (“the Gate”). His announced mission was heralding the arrival of *"One greater than Himself."* This “one” would fulfill the prophetic expectations of all the great religions. Siyyid’s followers became known as Babis. Many were martyred as the movement suffered a great deal of persecution at the hands of orthodox Muslims.

The story (by Baha’i history) is told that the Bab was arrested and sentenced to death, to be executed on July 8, 1850. In the view of thousands, 750 Armenian soldiers raised their rifles and shot him. The Bab was uninjured. In fact, the bullets burned away the ropes. He then disappeared from their visions, only to be found back in his cell lecturing his students. When the lecture was complete, the Bab left with the soldiers and this time the execution was successful.<sup>198</sup>

In 1863, one of the Bab's followers, Mirza Husayn-'Ali-i-Nuri (1817-1892), confided in his son and very close followers that he was the “one” of whom Bab spoke. In 1866, Mirza went public with this proclamation and took on the title Baha'u'llah (gate to/of Allah). Most of his later life was spent in prison or exile. Baha'u'llah's son 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921), was appointed by His father to be leader of the movement after His father's death.

Baha’i came to the US in 1893. The world headquarters remains in Palestine. India has the single largest population of followers. The actual number of followers in the US is unknown. Baha’i claims among its members, Count Leo Tolstoy, Woodrow Wilson, and some members of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young. The US headquarters is just outside of Chicago where the cult has a nine-sided building, in which “there are nine concrete piers, nine pillars representing the nine living world religions, and nine arches. The building is beautifully centered in a park having nine sides, nine avenues, and nine gateways, and containing nine fountains.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org/Bahai.htm>. If one views this sect as Islamic in nature, then the combination of Baha’i and Islam gives this religious group the largest world wide presence.

<sup>198</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 271.

<sup>199</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, 273.

## Beliefs

Baha'is believe that God is transcendent and unknowable. However, He has sent great prophets to mankind, through whom the Holy Spirit has revealed the "Word of God." The *Great Manifestations of God* are:

- ☐ Abraham (c. 2100 B.C.)
- ☐ Moses (1456 B.C.)
- ☐ Krishna (1249 B.C.)
- ☐ Zoroaster (1000 B.C.)
- ☐ Buddha (757 B.C.)
- ☐ Jesus Christ (A.D. 33 )
- ☐ Mohammed (613)
- ☐ The Bab (1844)
- ☐ Baha'u'llah (1863)<sup>200</sup>

Baha'is believe there is, essentially, only one religion and the great messengers of the past have progressively and more fully revealed its nature. Those differences in doctrine and belief which can be attributed to their founders and are not later accretions, can be attributed to the circumstances and needs of the time and place in which each religion started.

For most members, God is impersonal force, devoid of personality who is the sum of all goodness. The doctrine of sin is denied.


Every person has an immortal soul. Unlike everything else in creation, it is not subject to decomposition. At death, the soul is freed to travel through the spirit world.

Baha'i has always promoted social change, including supporting the place of women.

They believe that there will eventually be a single world government, to be led by Baha'i, and based on the Faith's administrative framework.

## Practices

Members:

 pray each day

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<sup>200</sup>This list is taken from ReligiousTolerance.org's WEB site. Martin includes Confucius and not the Bab in the list. *Rise of the Cults*, 109.

- ✍ observe 9 holy days
- ✍ fast 19 days a year
- ✍ Use a calendar designed by the Bab which consists of nineteen months, each having nineteen days, with New Year's Day being March 21.
- ✍ work to abolish prejudice
- ✍ regard work as a form of worship
- ✍ make at least one pilgrimage, if they are able, to the Shrine of the Bab and the houses in which Baha'u'llah lived, which are situated near the Baha'i world headquarters.
- ✍ Reflecting their origins in Shiite Islam, Baha'is do not consume alcohol.
- ✍ There are seven world wide worship centers – one is in Illinois.
- ✍ There are no clergy, sacraments, or rituals.
- ✍ It takes nine adults to form a spiritual worship group.

Baha'i scriptures are comprised of the writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah, together with the writings of Abdu'l-Baha. Among the better known writings of Baha'u'llah are, *The Most Holy Book*, *The Book of Certitude*, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, *The Hidden Words* and *The Seven Valleys*. There are many others books of Baha'i scripture.

There have been five or six groups break away from Baha'i over the years over issues of "interpretation."

Baha'i, then, is a syncretistic religion which aims at the unity of all religions under one umbrella, a brotherhood of man. The major problem with the approach is that all must come to see Baha'u'llah as the messiah of our age. It is clear Christians will never do this. It is also, almost as clear than neither will the Muslim world.

## Sources

The history and practices of Islam given in this chapter are a composite of information found in the following sources. Unless specific information or quotes were taken from a source, I have not footnoted the information.

Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*, USA, Victor Books, 1977, 1990.

Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985.

Walter Martin, Hank Hanegraaff, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa., Appendix D.

Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Fritz Ridenour, *So What's the Difference?*, Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, a division of G/L Publications, 1967.

John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *The Facts on Islam*, The Anker Series, Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1991, 1998.

# The Occult

The world of the occult conjures visions of *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Exorcist*, *Poltergeist*, Stephen King's novels, and an entire host of other movies and books. Unfortunately, the world of the occult is much more far reaching than the imagination of writers and movie directors.

At the same time, the world of the occult is hard to define and discuss, for depending upon one's views, it covers a wide host of practices. Many of these are not religions, in and of themselves, but are "things" related to the world of Satan. An easy example might be palm readers. Another example is the infamous Ouija board. McDowell's Table of Contents has twenty-three different chapter entries and two appendixes on his section on understanding the occult.<sup>201</sup> Time does not allow us to cover the area to this depth.

The word "occult" is from the Latin *occultus*. The word carries the idea of things hidden, secret, and mysterious. Further, it involves things which go beyond the comprehension of the five human senses, dealing with the supernatural presence of angelic or demonic forces.<sup>202</sup>

Scripture testifies to the existence of the occult. Consider the demands to remove those who practice these religions from the land.

## Deuteronomy 18:9-14

9 "When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. 10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 "or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. 12 "For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. 13 "You shall be blameless before

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<sup>201</sup>Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983. It should be noted that two of the chapters are an introduction and one is a general conclusion.

<sup>202</sup>McDowell, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, 149.



*the LORD your God. 14 “For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.*

There is much in the practice of the occult which is fake, but one must be careful not to dismiss the entire realm as fakery. Remember, that while much scholarly debate exists over the exact meaning of the episode, the witch of Endor brought forth some spirit which she or King Saul thought was the prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 28:7-25).

The modern world has the same interest in the occult as did Saul. The Gospel has been secularized, curiosity magnified, and the occult glorified. It offers a certain kind of reality which appeals to the loneliness of man. Yet, we must remember that those practicing in the realm of the occult are in league with Satan. They are false prophets who seek to influence people and prevent those who are seeking to find God from discovering the true path.

## The World of the Occult

The world of the Occult will read something like this:

- ✍ Astrology
- ✍ Black Mass
- ✍ Demons
- ✍ Fortune Tellers, including modern “prophets” like Jeanne Dixon
- ✍ Dowsing
- ✍ Fire Walking
- ✍ Ghosts
- ✍ Hypnotists
- ✍ Magic
- ✍ Ouija Boards
- ✍ Parapsychology (Ghost Busters?)
- ✍ Psychic Surgery
- ✍ Satanism
- ✍ Superstition
- ✍ Witchcraft

In addition, we might add more specific religious groups such as Spiritism, Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, Swedenborgianism, Wicca, and the Church of Satan. We will look at these groups more closely as examples of the effects of looking to the evil spirits of the world. To combat this world of the occult, the Christian must understand that Christ has already defeated Satan and given this continuing power to defeat sin and the Devil to every believer. But, part of this understanding is the knowledge that Satan and the demons are real! Paul writes that we should not be

ignorant of the ways of the Devil.<sup>203</sup> We need to learn about how Satan operates and then be ready to take the offensive to combat the damage the Devil tries to impose upon the world. This involves letting the world know about the power of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>203</sup> **2 Corinthians 2:11** *lest Satan should take advantage of us; **for we are not ignorant of his devices.***

## A Word About Halloween

The day witches honor above all others is October 31. This is believed to be the night on which Satan and his witches have their greatest power. This is, of course, All Hallows Eve or Halloween. The origin is believed to go back to the practices of the Druids, a time dated to around 2,000 B.C. (the general time of Abraham and Issac). The Druids or Celts believed November 1 was the day of death, in honor of their god Samhain, the lord of death. November 1 was also the end of autumn and the beginning of winter.

The Druids believed that the spirits of the dead returned home for visits on All Hallow's Eve. The living were expected to provide food for the spirits in order not to have terrible things occur – that is, if the spirits did not receive a treat, they would do some tricking to the living!

The name Halloween is a form of the designation “All Hallow's Eve” and is the date set by the early church to honor all the saints. The church called the night “All Saints Eve.” Some church historians believe the original date of celebration of All Saints Eve to have been October 30, but this is primarily speculation. This is an example of the church taking on a pagan holiday and attempting to convert it to a Christian holiday in an effort to make the conversion of the pagans an easier process. While the original All Saints Eve was clearly not pagan, the old characteristics have crept into the practice. Today, Halloween is basically a secular holiday designed to sell candy and costumes. True witches, however, still celebrate the day as All Hallow's Eve preserving the pagan practices of a form of Satan worship.

# Spiritism

## Necromancy

This is foretelling the future with, supposedly, the aid of the dead.<sup>204</sup>

### 1 Timothy 4:1-2

*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*

With Saul running off to the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7), it is easy to believe those who claim this is the oldest form of religious counterfeit known to man. Even earlier, Moses wrote against the spiritists (Exod 7, 8). Spiritism is the “science, philosophy, and religion” which says that life is continuous so the dead can come and talk to the living. This talking usually involves the services of a medium. A medium is an individual who acts as the intermediary between the material world and the spirit world. Spiritism does not teach physical reincarnation.<sup>205</sup>

## Modern History

Most Christians trace the source of modern spiritism to Kate and Margaret Fox in 1848. These two contacted the spirits living in their new house and spiritism was alive and well once more. The practice claimed such followers as Horace Greeley, the New York editor who made famous the saying “Go West, young man,” Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (Sherlock Holmes author), Elizabeth Barrett Browning, James Fenimore Cooper, philosopher William James, and Episcopal Bishop James Pike. In 1960, Pike attempted to contact the spirit of his dead son.

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<sup>204</sup>Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983, 240, quoting Dennis Wheatley, *The Devil and All His Works*, New York: American Heritage Press, 1971, 71.

<sup>205</sup>Some refer to spiritism as spiritualism. With McDowell I object to this alternate title since there is nothing spiritual about their beliefs. McDowell, *Ibid*.

There is a wide range of estimates on the size of this group. Martin states there are 455 spiritist “churches” actively operating in the US with a possible membership of 200,000, while in South America the number of practitioners exceeds three million.<sup>206</sup> Gerstner sites the formation of the Federation of Spiritualist Churches and Associations and other materials to conclude the worldwide population at 2,000,000 but places as many as 700,000 of these in the U.S.<sup>207</sup> Other associations of Spiritists include the National Spiritualist Association and the International General Assembly of Spiritualists. There are many smaller groups, and many “independent churches.” There also appears to be a wide fluctuation in membership based upon world events (such as wars). It seems that a large percentage of Spiritists are Roman Catholics or former Roman Catholics.

The list of those involved in this religion include witches, wizards, clairvoyants, mediums, seers, fortunetellers, soothsayers, witch doctors, shamans, and the modern psychic-hot lines. As can be seen from the list of practitioners, the leap to ESP and other types of spiritual communications is easy to make.

Mediums primarily contact the dead spirits through seances. Materialization is the term used to describe the appearance of the spirit during the seance. The events of the seance are spectacular but leave no lasting effect. They include trumpet speaking and spirit rapping or knocking. On the other hand, some claim to take photographs of the spirits appearing during the seance. Spirits also leave behind ectoplasm, the substance which streams forth from the bodies of the mediums during the encounters. It is probably known better by its movie name of “slime.” There are also stories of “automatic writing,” that is, the producing of written material by the medium who is not in control of his conscious self.

But, as can be seen, all of these “proofs” can be faked and there is no true proof that the dead can communicate with the living. However, the comments of Walter Martin are important to keep in mind when dealing with the spiritist.

However, not all psychic or spiritistic phenomena can be exposed as fraudulent. There is a spiritual dimension which cannot be ignored. Authentic spiritists draw their power from the one the Bible calls “a roaring lion” who seeks “whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8), who is Satan.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>206</sup>Walter Martin, *Rise of the Cults*, Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1973, 95.

<sup>207</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Cults*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, 87.

<sup>208</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 228.

## Beliefs

The basic beliefs of a spiritist are anti-Christian. Irvine discusses a Spirit Conference held in Rhode Island in the early 1900s when the following list of resolutions was passed:

- ✍ To abandon all Christian ordinances and worship
- ✍ To discontinue Sunday School
- ✍ To denounce sexual tyranny
- ✍ To affirm that animal food should not be used<sup>209</sup>

The National Spiritualist Association adopted the following principles of beliefs in 1899 and 1909:

- ✍ The Fatherhood of God
- ✍ The brotherhood of man
- ✍ Continuous existence
- ✍ Communion of spirits and ministry of angels
- ✍ Personal responsibility
- ✍ Compensation and retribution hereafter for good or evil done on earth
- ✍ A path of endless progression<sup>210</sup>

or, try a different version of the list:

- ✍ We believe in God.
- ✍ We believe that God is in every living thing.
- ✍ True religion is in obeying the laws of life.
- ✍ We never die.
- ✍ Spiritualism proves that we can talk with people in the spirit world.
- ✍ We believe that we should treat others as we want them to treat us.
- ✍ We are punished by our sins and we will be happy if we obey the laws of life.
- ✍ Every day we can begin again.<sup>211</sup>

In this old religion one can see all of the seeds of the more modern movements.

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<sup>209</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 176.

<sup>210</sup>As summed up in Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990, 168.

<sup>211</sup>Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949, 336. Braden states this list was designed for use in classes presenting Spiritism to “new embers.”

# Swedenborgianism

## The New Church The Church of New Jerusalem

### History

As cults go, this one has an old background, dating to the 1700s and the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1688. Swedenborg has been called the earliest of the great clairvoyants. His church is called the Church of New Jerusalem. Its membership is similar to that of the Worldwide Church of God, with, perhaps, 150,000 members world wide. The Church of New Jerusalem teaches a need for a rebirth of Christianity – along the lines of the teachings of Swedenborg!

Swedenborg had a interest in science, especially geology, and religion, but an illness appears to have affected his mind. Following the illness, Swedenborg had a vision wherein loathsome creatures crawled around the walls of his room. A man appeared to tell Swedenborg that he would be God's voice to communicate the teachings of the unseen realm to the people of the world. He was to be the source of new revelation.

### Beliefs

Swedenborgism is a mixture of New Age, Mind Science, and the mystical. Swedenborg talked to the spirits. Further, the group believes in astral projection and automatic handwriting, clear traits of Spiritism. They fail to observe any of the doctrines of classic Christianity. The beliefs of this group include:

- ✍ A denial of the atonement, the Trinity, the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- ✍ All religions lead to God (pluralism!)
- ✍ There is no devil
- ✍ The Scriptures can only be properly interpreted through Swedenborgianism
- ✍ One may sin in heaven.
- ✍ The only valid portions of the New Testament are the four Gospels and Revelation.

- ✍ Salvation is by good works
- ✍ There is no physical resurrection
- ✍ Angels (and evil spirits) are not supernatural creations of God, but are rather, humans who have died
- ✍ At death, a person's mind falls asleep for three days in a place called the world of the spirits. Afterwards, he awakens and those spirits who have died before help him adjust. He then forms his own spiritual body in which to reside.
- ✍ There is marriage in heaven.

I want to take a moment to add a lengthy paragraph from one of the commentaries on the place of sexual love in this group. We have already seen other cults where sex and free love are important elements (i.e., the Moonies), but these comments will also set the stage for some understanding of more extreme examples.

The predominant subject in the teacher's mind was "conjugal love," which was indeed in his view "heavenly love in its highest form," and is according to him a great subject of interest, and conversation among the angels. In spite of our Lord's denial, they do "marry and are given in marriage in heaven!" There are passages in Swedenborg's writings so grossly indelicate, Dr Pond assures us, that they ought never to have been translated. Swedenborg gives 55 cases in which a married man may judge himself free to be unfaithful to his marriage vows; and in certain cases he permits and even recommends flagrant immorality.<sup>212</sup>

How important are the actual teachings of Swedenborg to the modern Church of New Jerusalem? Consider Martin's description of this cultic church.

The Church of New Jerusalem is, therefore, inextricably bound to the teachings of Swedenborg and his interpretation of the Bible. Women may join the church at the age of eighteen and men at the age of twenty-one, but only after studying the writings of Swedenborg for some six months.<sup>213</sup>

Here is a prime example of the dominant leadership of a cult founder. Not only did Swedenborg rule the cult when he was alive, but he still rules some 250 plus years later! This helps to explain the immense immorality of many cults. The morals of one person changes the view points of entire groups.

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<sup>212</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 182. Irvine sites several of Swedenborg's writings including one entitled *Arcana Celestia* and another entitled *Conjugal Love*.

<sup>213</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 517.



# Theosophy

There is no religion higher than truth.

No man in becoming a Theosophist, need cease to be a Christian, a Buddhist, a Hindu; he will but acquire a deeper insight into his own faith.

Mrs. Besant<sup>214</sup>

To be admitted to the highest degree of the first section, the Theosophist must have become free of every leaning toward any one form of religion in preference to another. He must be free from all exacting obligations of society politics and family.

*Golden Book*<sup>215</sup>

*Theo* is the Greek word for God – this is the word used in the New Testament of God the Father.

*Sophia* is the Greek word for wisdom.

What we have in this name, then, is the “wisdom of God.” But, one might ask how wise is this group?

The wisdom of God, in both its true form, and in man’s version, are scattered throughout the Bible. Solomon, for example, records much of man’s wisdom in Ecclesiastes. Nothing is new!

## History

The roots of the modern version are from Russia, via India and Tibet. The worldwide headquarters are actually in India, with the US group being operated out of Illinois.

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<sup>214</sup>William C. Irvine, *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, 1917, 192.

<sup>215</sup>Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1949, 228, quoting C. Jinarajadasa, *The Golden Book of the Theosophical Society*, The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, India, 1925, 26

Big name members have included William Gladstone and Thomas Edison. The appeal of this group is, in one sense at least, to the intellectual who cannot not admit to the ability of one to take a “leap of faith.”

The group was started in New York in about 1875 by Madame Helena Petrova Blavatsky (1831-1891), who was born in Russia, and her “lover,” Henry Steel Olcott, a New York lawyer. Blavatsky was rich, twice divorced, and well traveled. In her travels she searched for the meaning of life. The teachings she learned while in Tibet and India came with her to the U.S. Mrs. Anne Besant left her husband to become the leader of the group in India and England at the death of Blavatsky.

The group has no doctrinal statements. It is governed by a set of general principles, of which there are three major ones:

- To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color.
- To encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science.
- To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.

Theosophy teaches that the universe is one interrelated whole. Everything is either matter or spirit and through the process of reincarnation, both are evolving closer and closer together, until they become totally united. As a person is evolving, he obtains enlightenment. This is probably as close to a definition of salvation as exists for this group. Man is composed of several elements which include the divine, monadic, spiritual, intuitional, mental, astral and physical.

Blavatsky believed that there was an ancient society of Masters or Adepts, also called Mahatmas. These persons had a complete understanding of Divine Wisdom. These were the great souls and they taught Blavatsky, via the spirit world. Koot Hoomi was one of the spirits who was the primary teacher of Blavatsky.

## Beliefs

Jesus is considered to be the reincarnation of one of the great masters. He was not the world teacher the group looks for. In fact, Mrs. Besant claimed to have discovered the great teacher in her adopted son, an Indian, Krishnamurthi. While Krishnamurthi accepted this title for a while, he eventually rejected the designation.

The group teaches that all men become a little god or a little Christ through a series of evolutionary growth steps. While different versions of these steps exist in print, the idea is clearly summarized as follows:

- Body
- Vitality
- Astral Body
- Animal Soul
- Human Soul
- Spiritual Soul
- Spirit<sup>216</sup>

So, Man is two parts, material (Body, Vitality, Astral) and Spirit (Animal, Human, and Spiritual), both of which will eventually merge in the future into Spirit.

As can be seen from this list, the ideas of revelation, a personal God, miracles, heaven, acts of faith, atonement, and personal salvation are all foreign to this belief system. It is all “karma,” the “law of sowing and reaping,” that directs a man’s footsteps. Man chooses his own course.

Braden sites another source to the effect that Blavatsky stated there were some 64,000 mistakes in the Bible.<sup>217</sup>

## In Perspective

If viewed from a Christian perspective, the idea of matter and spirit being separated and all there is arises from a form of Gnosticism. On the other hand, the “all-in-one, one-in-all” concept of reincarnation smacks of the Eastern concepts, reflecting the influences of the Hindu Blavatsky had contact with while in India. The concept of speaking to spirits for knowledge comes from Spiritism and the world of the occult. There is no Christianity here. This is not a cult, but is a world religion which must be reckoned with. There are roughly 120 theosophical society centers worldwide. There are no membership statistics, so it is unclear how large this group actually is.

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<sup>216</sup>John H. Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Cults*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960, 100.

<sup>217</sup>Charles S. Braden, *These Also Believe*, 252.

## The Rosicrucian Fellowship

One of the interesting changes from the 1985 edition of *Kingdom of the Cults* to the 1997 Edition is the elimination of this group. The question might be, why drop it? Or, why was it included in the first instance?

Martin calls the Rosicrucian Fellowship one of the most mystically inclined religious groups in the world. He does not classify the Fellowship as a cult but rather includes it in his appendix.<sup>218</sup> He sees the literature of the group as being a mix of symbolism, anthropology, transmigration (reincarnation cycle), and spiritism. We include the Fellowship in our study as it represents one of the links between spiritism, Eastern Religions, and the occult.

### History

This is an ancient cult or group dating some 600 years in the past. It mixes pagan mythology with Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The cults mixes all of the “truth” of these religions in an effort to create a master system of beliefs.

Christianus Rosenkreutz (1378-1484) became opposed to the teachings of the Christian Church. He claimed that he was a revealer of the mysteries of the truth, especially the mysteries of the rose cross. The cult arose at a time when secret occult societies flourished. Its life was continued when others died, because of a “blessing” from Freemasonry, another secret society. The Masons not only pronounced Rosicrucianism genuine, the Masons borrowed usages and customs from the Fellowship.

The letters AMORC are the identifying mark of the Fellowship. The group denies it is a religion. Rather, it is a brotherhood which attempts to help mankind master its destiny. The best estimates of its modern size places the number of followers at under 100,000.

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<sup>218</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 507. Martin’s inclusion of this group in the appendix suggests his view that this is a world religion, not a Christian cult, but clearly one which influences the cults.

## Beliefs

Seven is the symbolic number of the Fellowship. Man progresses through seven steps of growth to become perfect. There exist seven worlds with seven divisions, all governed by a Universal Spirit. Everything is unified under this system.

To the Rosicrucian, the Cross becomes the symbol of evolution – man's past, present, and future merging together.

Jesus manifested Himself to assist man in this evolution.

God is an impersonal being, composed of seven spirits, with the Universal Spirit at the top. Or, more properly, the seven spirits together comprise the Universal Spirit.

Man has undergone various epics or stages of development on earth. The Rosicrucians believe in the mythical lost continent of Atlantis. The Caucasians of today come from this ancestors of this continent.

Man is evolving into a divine person, already being a demi-god. It is this evolution which will allow mankind to ultimately become the universal brotherhood of man.

## In Perspective

Why touch upon this group? Remember that this cult is 600 years old. While we think of the ideas of New Age as being new, many of the New Age ideas find their life in Rosicrucianism. And, this cult is nothing more than spiritism and the occult combined with other religions! Although we have not yet gotten to our materials on New Age, the thing to remember is that there is nothing new about the foundations of New Age.

# Satanism

## Church of Satan

We cannot conclude the study of the world of the occult without three final groups. As indicated, space and time does not allow us to touch upon all of the occultic groups, but as we have seen, they are numerous, active, and under the obvious influence of Satan. At the true extreme, there is a small group which worships Satan directly, although they outwardly claim they do not worship the Devil of Scripture. This group is the Church of Satan.

The Church of Satan was founded in 1966 by Anton Szandor LaVey (1930-1999). This group claims a “pre-Christian” concept of Satan based upon pagan images of power, virility, sexuality, and sensuality. Satan is not a living being but is a force of nature. As such Satan has nothing to do with hell, demons, or the other popular concepts of the Devil such as pitchforks, sadistic torture, or profound evil. The group does, however, use the Black Mass for publicity purposes.<sup>219</sup>

## Beliefs

It is difficult to obtain a true view of the Satanist. Published practices and beliefs include:

- No worship of a living deity
- Emphasis on the power and authority of the individual
- There is no redeemer
- A respect for life.
- Indulgence, not abstinence
- Vital existence, not spiritual pipe dreams
- Undefined wisdom

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<sup>219</sup>The Black Mass reverses the rituals of the Roman Catholic Mass by ridiculing and desecrating the objects of worship. Oftentimes a nude woman is stretched on the altar. The ritual ends with the high priest having sex with the “sacrifice.” An upside-down cross is the main symbol used in the Black Mass. Its history apparently lies in the desire of the witches to worship on the Sabbath.

- Kindness to those deserving of it, not love wasted on ingrates
- No turning of the other cheek – if someone hits you, smash back
- Do not be concerned for psychic vampires
- Man is the most vicious of all animals
- Gratify all of your desires
- Sins are stupidity, pretentiousness, self-deceit, herd conformity, lack of perspective, forgetfulness of past orthodoxies, counterproductive pride, lack of aesthetics.
- The highest holiday to celebrate is one's birthday
- Other holidays are the solstices and equinoxes
- The names of Satan are Satan, Lucifer, Belial, and Leviathan
- Ceremonies are pageants used to celebrate a person
- Rituals are based on "magick" and consist of:
  - Sex magic
  - Healing or happiness ritual
  - Destruction ritual (sticking pins in a doll, etc.)
- The symbol of the Satanism, aside from the inverted Cross, is the Sigl of Baphomet, a goat's head drawn in an inverted 5-pointed star, with one point downward and two points up, surrounded by a circle. This symbol is actually trademarked by the Church of Satan.
- A.S. LaVey's book, *The Satanic Bible* is the guiding writing of the group.
- They speak a hidden magical language called Enochian. It sounds like a mix of Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin.
- Bells are rung nine times, a silver chalice is used, and a gong, sword, wine, and other exotic devices are the tools of the rituals.
- They claim ritual killings violate their principles.
- Suicide is discouraged
- Wiccans are hypocrites.<sup>220</sup>

## In Perspective

Satanism is a force to be concerned with, but much of the world shares this concern with Christians. Despite the official statements of the Church of Satan, the popular image of the Church strongly suggests that the ritual killing of humans does occur. In other words, the Church of Satan matches the Devil – it is pure evil. As such, this repulses many people, be they members of Christianity, other world religions or cults, or the agnostic / atheists of the world. The Church of Satan is simply too evil for most people's blood and, therefore, will not grow in any significant numbers or influence. What we must realize, however, is that just as the Christian is admonished

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<sup>220</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org/satanis1.htm>. There is one other major Satanist group in the world, the Temple of Set, which recognizes the ancient Egyptian deity Set as a living entity and the focus of worship.

to be aware of the tools of Satan, so, too, the Devil understands human nature and psychology. He knows direct worship will not be appealing to but a few people. So, Satan spends little effort here, but as we have seen, expends a great deal of effort corrupting the fringes of Christianity in an effort to slowly and patiently direct people's views toward false religions that seem less threatening.

Of course, the sad part of the story is that all of these are threatening, for all result in a life in eternal misery when the follower does not accept Jesus as the true Christ. Satan wins without the need to have people actually worship him.



# Witchcraft

## Wicca

We are not evil. We don't harm or seduce people. We are not dangerous. We are ordinary people like you. We have families, jobs, hopes, and dreams. We are not a cult. This religion is not a joke. We are not what you think we are from looking at T.V. We are real. We laugh, we cry. We are serious. We have a sense of humor. You don't have to be afraid of us. We don't want to convert you. And please don't try to convert us. Just give us the same right we give you – to live in peace. We are much more similar to you than you think.

Margot Adler<sup>221</sup>

Even by the standards of those who practice witchcraft, this may be the world's oldest religion. Most view witchcraft, especially its modern form of Wicca, as being based upon the old pagan practices of the Celtic society, mixed, perhaps, with the rituals of the Freemasons and the ceremonial magick of other Satanic groups. While all Wiccans consider themselves to be witches, it is to be noted that not all witches consider themselves to be Wiccan. We will focus primarily on Wiccans for they are the ones suing the military and prison systems demanding equal time, space and money to practice their religions. They have encountered much more success in this area than has the Church of Satan.

Satanism is a direct substitute of Satan for God. Witchcraft becomes more acceptable to the world because it is not a direct substitute. Witchcraft is less of a perversion and therefore appears to many to be less of a threat. Many are willing to try it or, at least, allow it a chance.

## History

The world views paganism as the worship of nature. This worship involved multiple gods and rituals which often involved sacrifices, including humans. This was the religion of the Canaanite neighbors of the nation of Israel who were to be driven from

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<sup>221</sup><http://www.religioustolerance.org/witchcra.htm>. Adler is one of the leading proponents of Wicca.

the Promised Land. History shows that this type of worship was not, however, limited to the Canaanites. Modern history finds that these religions were almost completely wiped out in the past by Christians and Muslims. The new growth is called neopaganism or new paganism and is a religion built upon a reconstruction from ancient sources. In other words, it probably is not exactly the same as it used to be!

Neopaganism incorporates the worship of nature of paganism with twenty-first century knowledge. The system teaches that no one belief system is correct and an individual must have a freedom of choice for his beliefs. Paganism is usually non-centralized, without a hierarchy or a set of dogma. The Pagan Federation has issued the following set of principles for neopaganism:

- Love for, and kinship with, nature
- Ethic: Do what thou wilt, but harm none.
- Divine reality as a concept of goddess and gods

The main branches of paganism are Shamanism,<sup>222</sup> Goddess Spirituality (“Mother Nature”), Sacred Ecology (“Save the Environment”), and various magical groups. The Druids are the most predominant and public group in England. Wicca is the largest in the United States (and probably the world).

Wicca as an identifiable religion is only about 50 years old. What the Christian needs to realize is that the practices of Wicca come from the Old Testament. Even the leaders of Wicca, such as Gerald Gardner, effectively agree. Gardner sees the roots of Wiccan rituals as being associated with fire, the hunt, animal fertility, plant propagation, tribal fertility, and the curing of disease in prehistoric man. These rituals developed into a religion which recognized a Supreme Deity, who was incapable of being understood.<sup>223</sup>

It is interesting to note that ReligiousTolerance.org describes Wicca as the 8<sup>th</sup> largest religion in the world, behind Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Bahai.<sup>224</sup> The group can claim this position by lumping all of the cults Mormons, etc., into the religions they associate themselves with. In other words, aside from these eight, there are very few world religions. It is also a sign of the times that the neopagan groups have more page space on the ReligiousTolerance.org WEB site than many of the other world religions. This includes a set of pages on Christianity versus Wicca which contains the analysis of Bible versions in favor of Wicca to prove that Christianity has the wrong view of witches. Or, to be more

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<sup>222</sup>For all practical purposes, this is the collective version of the religions of the Native Americans. Many of the practices of the Native Americans have effectively been incorporated into the tenets of New Age, such as the “spirit catcher” hanging from many rearview mirrors.

<sup>223</sup>[http://www.religioustolerance.org/wic\\_hist.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/wic_hist.htm).

<sup>224</sup>Ibid.

precise, that Moses was not writing about witches and sorcerers when he wrote God's command to remove all of this group from the land.

The pagan history is also characterized as being the source of many Christian holidays. This is certainly true in one sense as the Christian church attempted to rework and change the focus of days like Christmas and Halloween in an effort to make Christianity "user friendly" to new groups. But, we must keep in mind that in one sense, the entire world was pagan and the use of common terms, such as the names of the days of the week, or holidays, should not be unexpected. God did not direct the Jews to rename everything. And by the time of Christ, the focus was clearly on the preaching of the Good News of Salvation, not upon renaming everything to Christian terms.

Another example of how Satan operates in the world is an effort on the part of the Wiccans to take an event of history and cast much blame and guilt upon the Christian or Roman Catholic Church as the culprit. This is especially true of the "Burning Times." The Wiccans present the position that history does not show much, if any, real connection between witches and those victims of the Burning Times. The victims are characterized as midwives, native healers, single women who lived alone, people against whom a neighbor had a grudge, people who confessed under torture, and those in the wrong place at the wrong time. While Roman Catholic Church sources indicate that some 3,000 witches were killed, the neopagan sources claim as many as 9,000,000 deaths!<sup>225</sup> The Burning Times refers, of course, to that extended period of history when the Christian Church was cleansing itself of witches and other obvious followers of Satan. The effort commences as early as 9<sup>th</sup> Century, but the Wiccans specially call the time period of 1550-1650 as the Burning Times.

While the Burning Times have ended, the modern Wiccan movement sees accusations of the ritual abuse of children and those who have been brain washed into "remembering" childhood molestation, as the modern day equivalent.<sup>226</sup>

## Beliefs

As stated above, the belief system of Wiccans and other neopagan groups may be summarized as follows:

- A duotheistic or polytheistic view of god, with goddesses and gods

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<sup>225</sup>[http://www.religioustolerance.org/wic\\_burn.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/wic_burn.htm)

<sup>226</sup>Inline with this rewriting of history and recharacterization of events, the Wiccans now claim that Satanic abuse rituals are a hoax created by the Christian church.

- Many followers are solitary practitioners
- Others practice in small groups called coven circles, covens, garths, groves, hearths, kindreds
- Four main seasonal days are celebrated – the equinoxes and the solstices
- Usually four other days between the above four are also celebrated
- Rituals are conducted outdoors if at all possible
- Many do not practice publicly for fear of persecution
- Concern for the environment

The extent the old rituals have been secretly maintained is difficult to determine. One source lists the following as being among the ancient requirements of becoming a witch:

- Denial of the Christian Faith
- Rebaptism by the Devil with a new name
- Symbolic removal of the Christian baptismal
- Denial of godparents and assigning of new sponsors
- Token surrender to the Devil of a piece of clothing
- Swearing allegiance to the Devil while standing inside a magic circle on the ground
- Request to the Devil to write one's name in the book of death
- Promise to sacrifice children to the Devil
- Promise to pay an annual tribute to the assigned demon. Only black-colored gifts were valid
- Marking various parts of one's body with the Devil's mark. Various marks were used to represent the mark of the Devil.
- Vows of service to the Devil to include never to adore the sacraments, to smash holy relics, never to use holy water or candles and to keep silent on one's relationship with Satan.<sup>227</sup>

What must jump out at one familiar with religions is that the presentations made by the Wiccans is a mix of Satanism and New Age. The Devil is hard at work attempting to package his practices in a form which will have some appeal to the general public. What can be more appealing to the modern public than a concern for nature and the environment?

Margot Adler estimates there are 50,000-to-100,000 identified Pagans in the U.S.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, *Handbook of Today's Religions*, San Bernardino, CA: Campus Crusade for Christ, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1983, 262, quoting Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum*, 1608, translated by Dr. R. H. Robbins.

<sup>228</sup> [http://www.religioustolerance.org/neo\\_paga.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/neo_paga.htm)

## In Perspective

Wicca and witches are the tools of Satan. Scripture recognizes this point and the reader is referred to the chapter on the Occult to read God's positions on these practitioners. What the modern church must watch is the ever changing nature of definitions by various cult groups and philosophers. While we may call ourselves Christian, what we mean is that we believe in the essential doctrines of the church and the inerrancy of the Bible. On the other hand, many people, both inside and outside the Christian community now define a Christian as any person who holds Jesus in reverence, views him as the greatest of prophets, and tries to follow his teachings. While this definition will not allow a follower of Islam to be a Christian, many Wiccans, Unitarians, Spiritists, and other cult members, such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, meet this definition.

It all comes back to what you actually believe and how that belief is reflected in your daily life.

## The Doomsday Cults

We opened this study with the story of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of Uganda and their apparent mass suicide. It seems appropriate as we finish these series of chapters on Satanism and the Occult to make a few specific comments about these groups.

Just as Martin's *Kingdom of the Cults* has dropped Rosicrucianism from its pages, it has added a chapter on what has been entitled "The Apocalyptic Cults."<sup>229</sup> The word "apocalyptic" comes from the Greek *apokalypsis*, which properly means nothing more than "uncovering." In religious terms, the *apokalypsis* has come to mean the uncovering of the end times. In Christian terms, this uncovering is related to the Revelation, or the *Apokalypsis*, of Jesus Christ.

We have already seen that many of the cults have their formation, in one form or another, in end times prophecy. This has always been a major theme of discussion, as is obvious from all of the book shelves in the waning months of 1999. Great disasters were to occur come January 1, 2000. It is now May, 2000 and these terrible events are yet to arrive. Still, this is the stuff of the formation of the Seventh Day Adventists and a point of contention among the Russellites and the Rutherfords of the Jehovah Witnesses. Every cult and religion faces the question of the end times.

The first of these was Montanus, a man ultimately labeled a heretic by the early church and whose teachings appear to have been completely overcome by A.D. 400. Many others followed throughout the centuries. As Hanegraaff writes:

The number of end-time prognosticators from centuries past is so high that it is impossible to mention them all in a chapter of this size. However, one can get an idea of just how many "prophets" have risen to popularity from a partial listing of the various years that were supposed to bring "the end": 500, 999, 1100, 1200, 1245, 1260, 1420, 1528, 1656, 1734, 1844, 1874. Most disturbing is the fact that this list of "prophets" and predictions continues to grow.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>229</sup>Walter Martin, Hank Hanegraaff, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa., Chapter 15.

<sup>230</sup>Ibid.

This list includes Christian prophecy teacher Edgar Whisenant, who predicted Jesus would return between September 11 and September 13, 1988. When the September prophecy failed, he revised the date to October 3. He continues to revise the date yearly. In 1992, Christian radio personality Harold Camping predicted a return about the year 1994. The Korean-based *Hyoo-go* (Korean for “rapture”) movement predicted a return of Christ on October 28, 1992. The list is seemingly endless.

While, as we have seen, concerns over the Return of Jesus make for bad theology and are contrary to the express statement of Scripture, most are apparently “harmless.” For example, consider the following quote of noted very conservative evangelist John R. Rice:

Is Mussolini the Antichrist? He may be. I know of no reason why he would not fit the description of this terrible Man of Sin. He is an Italian. He is evidently an atheist. He once debated for atheism. He has the ruthless disposition, the ruling genius. He has an obsession to restore the Roman Empire. Furthermore, he is already in power in Rome. If Christ called for His saints today and if every saved person should be taken out to meet Christ, then soon Mussolini might have a mandate over Palestine, make the prophesied treaty with the Jews, and in three and one-half years, forty-two months, over the whole world. Mussolini is somewhat past fifty, neither too young nor too old for the brief but meteoric rule of the horrible Man of Sin. The Man of Sin must be a ruler at Rome, and Mussolini might be the man.<sup>231</sup>

Rice was wrong, but did his “prophecy” do any damage? It potentially made both he and the Christian community look foolish, but probably did little else. But, on the other hand, how many people did it drive away from Christianity when it did not come true? Only God knows the answer.<sup>232</sup>

The Ugandan experiences have been played out in lesser detail in the U.S. over the past several years. We are probably all familiar with the Branch Davidian cult whose self-proclaimed “Son of God” leader, David Koresh, had for many years prophesied that “the end” was near. This cult is an off-shot of a branch of the Seventh Day Adventists. This is the cult in Waco, Texas invaded by the FBI in 1993, after a long siege. While the religious side of the prophecies had little to do with the invasion, the cult had stockpiled a massive cache of weapons (including many illegal ones) in preparation for Armageddon. Consider Hanegraaff’s description of the result and partial cause of the end of the invasion.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> A long list of others have been called the Anti-Christ. *Kingdom of the Cults* has quotes or references calling Henry Kissinger and Anwar el Sadat the Anti-Christ. Others have called Saddam Huessin the Anti-Christ. And, of course, the Pope has been a favorite target over the years.

David Koresh and nearly one hundred of his followers, including approximately two dozen children, met a torturous end. Coroner reports indicated that although many Davidians had perished from the flames and smoke inhalation, a significant number of them, including Koresh himself, had died from single gunshot wounds to the head. Among the dead were several well-educated individuals: an attorney, a nurse, an engineer, and a former police officer.

Recorded conversations made with government listening devices hidden by the FBI prior to the fire revealed that the Davidians started the conflagration by spreading and igniting flammable liquid in the building. Why would they do such a thing? The answer is simple: fire played a major role in their understanding of the biblical features of eschatology (doctrine of the end times, or last things).

According to notes scribbled in the margins of a Bible owned by Koresh follower Robyn Bunds, one of Koresh's wives, Koresh linked Armageddon (which he believed would be a confrontation with the government) to the sixth seal mentioned in Revelation 6:12, 17.<sup>15-21</sup> He then tied this seal of judgment to passages such as Joel 2:1-5 and Jeremiah 50. Koresh even quoted Jeremiah 50:22 to the FBI in an April 9 letter he sent out from the compound.

Additional notes made by Robyn, when compared with information contained in teaching tapes made by Koresh, indicate that the Davidian leader and his followers expected some type of genetic mutation to take place during the sixth seal judgment. Koresh apparently believed and taught that as God's representative on earth, he would loose fire upon the faithful, killing off their old nature and transforming them into flaming beings of divine judgment who would smite the enemy.<sup>233</sup>

In October, 1994, the Solar Temple in Quebec was destroyed by fire. Less than twelve hours later, the Solar Temple in Switzerland was also destroyed by fire. More than twenty-five people died in the fire in Switzerland. Recorded messages showed the fires related to a belief that the end of the world was imminent. Forty-six-year-old Luc Jouret, had promised his followers that the world's demise lay just ahead and that he, as the "new Christ," would be the one to lead them to glory. Jouret is quoted as saying, "We have arrived at the hour of Apocalypse."<sup>234</sup>

On March 20, 1995, members of the Japanese cult Aum Shinrikyo ("Supreme Truth") reportedly released a Nazi-invented nerve gas called sarin into the Japanese subway

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<sup>233</sup>Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, STEP electronic edition, Chapter 15.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid.



system. In a 1995 book entitled *Rising Sun Country: Disaster Approaches*, the cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, prophesied that nerve gas would be the weapon of choice during Armageddon. The subway attacks were meant apparently as a precursor to the world's end. The final battle originally was set to begin sometime between 1997 and 2000. Twelve people died and 5,000 was injured in the subway attack. Asahara had characterized himself as "today's Christ."

On March 21, 1997, a cult now called Heaven's Gate committed suicide while awaiting a UFO to arrive, an event apparently announcing the end of the world. Thirty-nine people died.<sup>235</sup>

All of this is frightening, for these are cults much like those already studied, but with an added element. Here the Satanic influences at work in the cult leader, create a stifling atmosphere which forces cult members to the extreme. There are a lot of strange and mysterious cults at operation in the world. We have only covered a few of them, but hopefully we have covered them in a form which allows the student to better understand the nature and make-up of cults. This knowledge hopefully will instill a desire and fire in the student to better learn God's Word so as to discern the theology and doctrine of cult leaders before they do any real damage. Unfortunately, in today's climate the voices of warnings are often too few and too late.<sup>236</sup>

The WEB site ReligiousTolerance.org gives considerable space to the Destructive or Doomsday cults. They define these groups as those who are religiously based, very high intensity, controlling groups, usually with dominant leader, that have caused or are liable to cause loss of life among its membership or the general public.

They see the following factors as leading to the Doomsday nature of these groups:

- ✓ Charismatic Leader
- ✓ Apocalyptic Outlook
- ✓ Social Encapsulation
- ✓ Weapons and other types materials usually are accumulated
- ✓ ReligiousTolerance.org sees these groups as following some general form of Christian theology.

One of the groups where the cries of warnings came too late is the largest example of Doomsdayism and leadership control. This is the People's Temple of Jim Jones which saw the largest mass suicide of a religious group on November 16, 1978 at Jonestown, Guyana. Mel White considered this tragedy in his book *Deceived* and reflects upon the types of difficulties faced in attempting to overcome the cult

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<sup>235</sup>Please see the chapter on New Age for a further discussion of UFO cults.

<sup>236</sup>For a discussion of some of the more peculiar cults, see Egon Larsen, *Strange Sects and Cults*, New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1971. Hart covers such groups as the Dukhobors, the Thugs, The Assassins, The Castrators, The Amish, , and Snake Handlers.

leaders. As with other groups, the victims were led to the People's Temple by a loneliness in their lives filled by the Temple. They found a group who would support their emotional and spiritual needs. In Jones they found, however, much more than they ever sought. Consider:<sup>237</sup>

- ✓ Jones created an illusion of respectability
- ✓ Jones killed their faith in the Bible and the Church (Abuse of authority)
- ✓ Jones kept them in a state of physical exhaustion (Abuse of time)
- ✓ Jones kept them in a state of poverty and dependence (Abuse of money)
- ✓ Jones kept them in a state of fear (Abuse of discipline)
- ✓ Jones kept them in a state of sexual bondage (Abuse of sexuality)
- ✓ Jones kept them in a state of isolation (Abuse of intimacy)

By the time Jonestown arrived, it was too late. The followers had been brainwashed and would do anything Jones asked. This is the sorrowful fate of the extreme cults. The overall traits of these cults are no different than the traits of all the other cults we have studied.<sup>238</sup> The difference is the extreme degree to which Jones practiced all of the traits.

Interestingly enough, while ReligiousTolerance.org paints the events at Jonestown in as favorable light as possible to Jones and the Peoples Temple, the site admits that the use of drugs and the mental instability of Jones were contributing factors to the tragedy. The WEB site also expresses that fear of the end of the world and extreme isolation of the community as contributing factors.<sup>239</sup>

In the case of Jonestown and the other Doomsday cults, the major difference is the instability of the leaders. These cults have undertaken, in essence, a mass sacrifice to Satan. This is Satanism at its finest. We must all be ever alert and fearful lest we fail to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and fail to help a lost soul in time of need.

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<sup>237</sup>Mel White, *Deceived*, Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1979.

<sup>238</sup>In an interesting aside, it is to be noted that ReligiousTolerance.org classifies mass murder Charles Manson and his group as a Doomsday cult.

<sup>239</sup>[http://www.religioustolerance.org/dc\\_jones.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/dc_jones.htm)

# Eastern Religions

## And their off-spring

Buddhism is an Eastern form of spirituality. . . . What is known as “Buddhism” is part of the common human heritage of wisdom, by which men have succeeded in overcoming the world, and in gaining immortality, or a deathless life.<sup>240</sup>

As we complete our survey of cults and world religions, it is important to take a direct, albeit brief, look at Eastern Religions. While most of us think of Eastern Religions as the worry of the Oriental mission field, these groups have invaded the U.S. religious scene in a variety of fashions. The concept of Eastern Religions is both simple and complex. From a religious point of view, this field may properly cover the Asiatic and Oriental geographical regions. As such, Islam and Judaism may be considered Eastern Religions. Since we have already considered these two groups, we will not recover that ground.

And as we cover this new ground, it is important to keep in focus where we are going. The general tenor of Eastern Religions, mostly some variety of Hinduism or Buddhism, have been in existence for thousands of years. It is through their syncretism into the New Age movement which is of most importance to us.

It is also important to understand that this is a complex area, for Buddhism alone may support some 60,000 different sects. With all of those centuries to development, it is no wonder that these religions do not represent a simple formula. We will, however, attempt to make this fairly simple for our intention is not to undertake a detailed study of this area. For those who want more information, some references are given at the end of this chapter.

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<sup>240</sup>Edward Conze, *Buddhism: its essence and development*, New York: Harper Colophon Books, Harper & Row Publishers, 1951, 11.

# Hinduism

This is the father of Eastern Religions. There is a large sense in which all of the Eastern Religions may be found within the history and complexities of Hinduism. At the same time, it is important to remember that at various points in history, Hinduism takes on different looks – ranging from pantheism, to polytheism, to monotheism, to agnosticism.

## Terms

- **Brahman** is the eternal Three-in-One God composed of Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Shiva, the Destroyer. Brahman worship has led to a wide range of sacrifices which in turn called for the development of a priesthood.
- **Man** submits to fate since man is a part of Brahman.
- The **Caste System** is determined by the laws of Manu. This is nothing more than a rigid social class structure.
- **Karma** is the law of sowing and reaping, that is, from good must come good and from evil must come evil.
- **Reincarnation** is a chain of rebirths whereby each soul can rise to a higher state.
- **Transmigration** or samsara is the endless cycle of reincarnation which man encounters.
- **Nirvana** is the final stage to be reached whereby the soul is fully emancipated from the cycle of reincarnation.
- **Yogas** are the disciplines whereby man learns to control his body and emotions.
- **Dharma** is the Law of Moral Order which each individual must follow to reach Nirvana.
- **Krishna** is the eight or ninth incarnation of Vishnu, one of the most widely worshiped deities.
- **Gurus** are teachers.
- **Swamis** and sadhus are holy men.

## General Beliefs

Hinduism is difficult to summarize, for while the essence of the religion is the same, the practices are different among each sect. There are many different ways of looking at a single object. No single view point provides the whole picture of the object, but each will be correct in its own right. Rites, ceremonies, systems and dogma may lead beyond themselves revealing new truths, leading to clarity. Every

work is a pointer to a higher truth. In this fashion, Hinduism is able to tolerate most other religions.

Salvation is achieved by:

- The way of works (Karma Yoga)
- The way of knowledge (Jnana Yoga)
- The way of devotion (Bhakti Yoga)

Any of the three will suffice.

The Hindus hold the cow, which is considered to possess great power, to be sacred.

The practice of popular Hinduism places great emphasis on the caste system. Originally there were four castes. These were the Brahmins (priests), the Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), the Vaisyas (craftsmen, farmers, artisans), and the Sudras (laborers, servants). Every one else were outcastes or untouchables. These social and occupational groups have now been divided into roughly 3,0000 subcastes. The true problem of the caste system is that Hinduism provides no mechanism to change castes.

From a practical view point, Hinduism has developed into a series of lesser gods. Practices include pilgrimages, diet restrictions, special postures and gestures, possession by the gods, sacred places, sacred formulas to be repeated, images and phallic emblems, and geometrical patterns.

## **Books of Belief**

The Vedas, meaning wisdom or knowledge, are the oldest writings and appear to have been composed over the same general time period as the Old Testament (1400-to-400 B.C.). This is really a collection of hymns ("mantras"), prayers, and ritual texts ("Brahmanas" which deal with ritual practice and the "Upanishads" which deal with doctrine). Two epic poems are considered as part of the sacred books. The first is the Ramayana and the other is the Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita is considered the most sacred of the writings and was added to the Mahabharata during the first century A.D.

## **Janism**

Any religion will develop off-shots and "cults." Hinduism is no exception. The first of these to consider is Janism, a group almost unknown outside of India. This group

is formed about 30 years prior to Buddhism. Mahavira (great hero), who is also known as Jina (conqueror), is credited with the founding of Jainism in the sixth century B.C. Like many in the Eastern faiths, Mahavira was born into the ruling class and, becoming dissatisfied, went wondering in search of fulfillment. Through self-mortification and meditation Mahavira is said to have reached Nirvana within his own lifetime.

Jainism has surged and died over its life time, in cycles much like the general Hindu beliefs. It is the humanistic religion of Hinduism, believing in a salvation by works. It is also gnostic in its outlook, believing everything in the universe to be eternal and composed of either living or non-living matter. Everything living possesses a soul. Karma ties the living portion to the non-living portion. Salvation is the release of the soul from its non-living parasite. This also releases the soul from its existing karma.

The three crowns of Jainism are:

- ✍ Right knowledge – that is, a proper understanding of Jainism philosophy
- ✍ Right faith – believing the Jainism scriptures
- ✍ Right conduct – involving many things, but primarily noninjury and asceticism

The concept of noninjury has become the best known mark of this religion. Jain monks will go out of their way so as not to injure the smallest insect.

Jainism is egocentric and there is no concept of grace or mercy. It is a religion of ritual rather than relationships.

## Buddhism

Buddhism was started by Siddhartha Gautama about 525 B.C. He, too, was one born into the upper castes who became dissatisfied and, ultimately, abandoned his family to follow his religious meditations. It was a realization of suffering in the world which led Gautama on his quest. During one of the periods of meditation, while sitting under a fig tree, Gautama reached the state of enlightenment. In other words, like Mahavira, Gautama reached Nirvana while still alive. He, thus, became known as Buddha, the Enlightened One, and the tree became known as the Bo or Bodhi, the Wisdom tree.

Gautama fought the caste system and rejected all forms of ritual and occultism. He taught Four Noble Truths:

- Life is full of pain and suffering
- Suffering is caused by the desire and lust for the pleasures of life
- Suffering can be overcome by eliminating the pleasure cravings
- Following the Eightfold Path is the manner in which the pleasure cravings are overcome.

The Eightfold Path is, in essence, a therapy pathway. It includes:

- Right knowledge of the Four Noble Truths
- Right intentions
- Right speech
- Right conduct
- Right livelihood which eliminates some occupations, including tax collectors and butchers
- Right effort
- Right mindfulness (self-analysis)
- Right meditations (Raja Yoga)

The concepts of Hinduism on achieving Nirvana by transmigration and karma are maintained in the teachings of Gautama. Transmigration was modified to cover not substance but feelings, impressions, and present moments. The goal of Buddhism is to become independent of the natural realm and to have total awareness of being.

Buddhism spread from India to China, Korea, and Japan, although it has declined in its native India and is almost nonexistent, being reabsorbed in Hinduism.

**Pure Land Buddhism** is the Buddhism of China. Its tenets are much like historic Buddhism.

**Zen Buddhism** is the opposite of Pure Land Buddhism. Salvation can only be claimed through self. Adherents look for supernatural experiences. Zen is the equivalent of Chinese and Indian words which refer to meditation that leads to insight. While very individually oriented, most serious Zen students follow a master. Zen has had a very influential effect on Japanese culture.

**Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism** was formed by Nichiren (1222-1282). This is the Sutra of the Lotus of Truth. Salvation is only found in the Lotus Sutra (sutra is a writing).

**Tibetan Buddhism or Lamaism** is the Buddhism of Tibet. It is a combination of Buddhism with the occult and the magical. The head of this system is the Dali Lama, who is supposed to be the incarnation of Bodhisattva. In earlier Buddhism, Bodhisattva is one on the way to becoming a Buddha. He postpones attaining Nirvana in order to help others achieve this goal.

## Sikhism

This another late reformation of Hinduism, dating to the time frame of the Christian Reformation. It was founded by Nanak (1469-1538) who was born into the ruler caste.

Nanak wanted to rid religion of its rituals and ceremonies. Salvation consisted of a combination of grace and works. Righteous living is required because the ideas of karma and transmigration have been carried into Sikhism.

Nanak's battle cry was that "there was no Hindu and no Muslim." God is Sat Nam (True Name) and he bestows grace on his followers. These followers are called Sikhs or disciples. This is a monotheistic version of Hinduism which views God as a formless, sovereign righteous person who is unknowable and absolute. When a person reaches Nirvana he is absorbed into God. It is to be noted that while the idea of Absolute God is Hinduistic, the idea of submission to God for salvation is Islamic in origin.

Nanak did not break with Hinduism. The rituals of Hinduism are replaced by the direction to be obedient to the divine guru, Sat Nam. Sikhism separated itself from Hinduism in the late 1500s, after the death of Nanak. Worship centers around the Temple and the sacred book, the Granth. The Granth is written in a "special script" and is not read by most adherents, just worshiped. There are between 6 and 8 million Sikhs today, but most are not strict practioners and the sect will probably be reabsorbed into Hinduism.<sup>241</sup>

## Zoroastrianism

This once widespread religion has almost died from existence. It is more closely connected to the Bible than any other religion (except, of course, for Judaism and Christianity). It derives its name from the Zoroastrian kings of Persia, three of whom are named in the Bible – Cyrus, Ahasuerus, and Darius.

This is a religion formed by one man, Spitoma Zoroaster (c. 628-551 B.C.). Born at a time when multiple gods were popular in Persia, Zoroaster had a series of visions which caused him to move one god, Ahura Mazda, the God of light, to the forefront and give him complete supremacy. Through a series of holy wars, Zoroastrianism

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<sup>241</sup>Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990,



became the religion of the Persian Empire. When Islam invaded Persia, the followers of Zoroastrianism either fled or died.

Zoroastrianism is a religion of dualism, but not the dualism of gnosticism. Rather, the religion paints the picture of a constant struggle between good and evil. Ahura Mazda (good) will eventually be triumphant.

The religion has a “works” salvation that is high in moral standards. Good thoughts, good words, and good deeds are the cornerstones. There will be a final resurrection and judgment of the dead. There is a heaven and hell concept. Those in hell who are evil will ultimately be destroyed in a fiery stream of molten metal. Angra Mainyu, the evil god, and his demons will also be annihilated. Before these judgments occur, a savior will appear.

Fire plays a major role in the rituals of the temple.

## Confucianism

The question of history has always been whether this is a religion or an ethical philosophy of life. The religion seems to go back to the beginnings of the Chinese civilization.

The religious base of Confucianism is a combination of animism<sup>242</sup> and ancestor worship. Confucius lived 551-479 B.C. He was born Chiu Kung and is credited with establishing the ethical system which now bears his name. At his death, his disciples collected his sayings in the *Analects*. The social systems of China were destroying themselves in the time of Confucius and his solution was deliberate tradition.

The ethical system assumes that men have the freedom to make choices. It further assumes that man is basically good. The ultimate virtue is a combination of self-respect and humanitarian feelings toward others. Confucianism is credited with the “Silver Rule:” “What you do not want others to do to you, do not do to them.”

His approach was to follow the middle road, avoiding the extremes of either side. This includes respect for age and certain relationships: father/son, ruler/subject, elder brother/younger brother, friend/friend, and husband/wife.

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<sup>242</sup> Animism is the belief that all matter is produced by a spiritual force which is separate from matter. This belief usually includes the idea that souls are independent of their physical being. This leads to both the concept of angels and demons, but also to the ability to communicate with the spirits and to become part of it.

Confucianism was more concerned with life on earth or not with heaven. It is a religion where ethics begins and ends with the wisdom of man. It is clearly a self-effort system. Confucius taught that man need no help beyond himself.

In the period of 206 B.C. - A.D. 220, Confucianism became the state religion of China. It remained the religion of the nation until 1912 with the formation of the Chinese Republic.

## Taoism

This is the mystical religion of China, the religion of the Yang and Yin. Its founder is Lao-tzu (604-517 B.C.), whom many scholars believe was a legend rather than a real person. His name means "Old Master."

Tao is difficult to translate or comprehend. It loosely means way, path or eternal principle and is said to be the mother of 10,000 visible things. The concept is one of a creative force which orders the cosmos, life, and reason.

The Taoist canon is known as the Tao Tsang and consists of around 1,120 volumes.

The wise man is to lead a life of reflection and quiet passiveness. Violence is to be avoided in all forms. Taoism is a monistic philosophy asserting that all things are an expression of the Tao. In other words, All-is-One, including contradictory items such as light and dark or good and evil. Nature is full of conflict between the Yang and Yin. However, all things become one at the center. There is no personal god or creator. The Chinese turned Taoism into a folk religion used to control the spirits. It became a religion of magic, superstition, witchcraft, and occultism.

<b>Yang</b>	<b>Yin</b>
Male	Female
Good	Evil
Active	Passive
Light	Darkness
Heaven	Earth
Sun	Moon
Summer	Winter
Positive	Negative
Life	Death

Both Taoism and Confucianism commenced as a philosophy which has changed as its religion developed. The significance of the original philosophy of Taoism, apart from its magical, mystical practice, is the importation into Western culture. It, together with Zen Buddhism, have become extremely popular in the Syncretistic movements which are merging into New Age. And, it must be remembered that Japanese Zen Buddhism was a combination of Indian Buddhism and Chinese Taoism.

## Shintoism

Shinto is the indigenous religion of Japan. Over the years it has suffered influence at the hands of Buddhism, Confucianism, and, odd as it may seem, Christianity.

At its origins, this is a primitive religion which focuses worship on nature and people. There is no historical foundation for this religion. It centers worship around Kami, a concept involving the gods, all aspects of nature, supernatural power, and people. Kami is everywhere and everywhere is Kami. It is a “force” in the universe. This is, obviously, a pantheistic religion.

The name itself appears to come from two Chinese words which mean “spirit way” (*shen* and *tao*). The Japanese version is *kami no michi*, or “the way of the gods.” It is only around A.D. 500-to-700, after Buddhism has entered Japan, that the followers of Shintoism commence to record the traditions associated with the religion.

By tradition, the Japanese islands were formed by the Shinto gods, Izanagi and Izanami, who are viewed as having mated to produce the Japanese race. Shintoism focuses upon loyalty to Japan and its emperor, the Mikado. Salvation is achieved by observing the many social and physical taboos of Japanese tradition. Salvation is the deliverance from the troubles and evils of the world. Ritual purity and offerings of food and rice wine are part of the practice. There are about 100,000 shrines run by a Shinto priesthood in Japan. There is no concept of sin or depravity. The religion does have a concept of immortality, which is “cured” by appeasing the gods.

The major influence upon Shintoism by the other religions is the introduction of an ethical system. There are approximately 150 more sects of Shintoism and many of these have become very aggressive in attempting to evangelize the religion outside of Japan.

## ISKCON -

### The International Society for Krishna Consciousness Hare Krishna Movement

As Western youth have searched for the meaning of life and spiritual fulfillment, they have turned to the Eastern Religions. One of the groups most willing to accommodate this emptiness is the Hare Krishna Movement. Their goal is to spread the Krishna Consciousness of Hinduism to overcome the pollution of modern society. You may recall that Krishna was one of the incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu.

Caitanya Mahaprabu (1486-1534) introduced liberation through devotional love and service to the religion. This devotional approach includes chanting aloud and ecstatic dancing. This group was introduced to the Western world by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. He formed ISKCON in 1966 and a few years later began a fertile writing career, producing some thirty books. The Krishnas have an ambitious goal of bringing a Krishna temple to every city in the world. Former Beatle George Harrison is involved in this movement through the distribution of records which include Hare Krishna mantras (hymns).

The Krishnas claim to be the direct discipleship succession from Krishna himself, and are, thus, the only true Hindu religion. Only through Bhaktivedanta's writings can the "authorized transcendental science of God-realization" be known.

To achieve Krishna Consciousness, one must participate in the temple activities. This includes communal living, austerity, and the spurning of all drugs, alcohol, tobacco, coffee, tea, illicit sex, science, education, violence, or carnality. All sleeping is done on the floor using sleeping bags. There are strict dietary rules. There is also a strict daily routine. Spouses are selected by the temple leaders. Only those who cannot remain celibate should marry. The ideal is not to have sex.

Krishnas are one of the few religions who worship a personal and infinite god. They view Krishna as the "supreme personality of God-head." However, salvation is by works, since the group has incorporated both the ideas of karma and *samsara* (reincarnation) into its beliefs. Salvation, then, is the liberation from the never ending cycle of reincarnation. Sin is viewed as being caused by ignorance and illusion.

## Transcendental Meditation

A second off-shot of the Eastern Religions is transcendental meditation. The followers of this practice claim that it is neither a religion nor that it has any metaphysical basis. The claims of TM are “health” related in that it reduces stress, improves health, heightens intelligence and creativity, and reduces the need for drugs. TM may be practiced without regard to a religious or ethical system.

TM was founded by Mahesh Brasad Warma, who was born in India in 1918. In 1956 he took the title of Maharishi (“great sage”) and came to the U.S. in 1959. He founded the Spiritual Regeneration Movement and became famous when stars such as the Beatles, became his followers. Although the movement declined when the Beatles went elsewhere, Maharishi turned his attention to training teachers of TM and the movement stabilized. Part of this change of approach was moving to a secular, “scientific” look. However, Court rulings have effectively stated that TM is a religion and the writings of Maharishi sustain the fact that the teachings are rooted in Hinduism. Maharishi describes TM as “a path to God” and “the fulfillment of every religion.” He speaks of a “God-consciousness.” The final stage of TM is “Unity consciousness” which corresponds to the final stage of raja yoga, the absorption into the all-that-is.

The umbrella organization is called the World Plan Executive Council and the title of Spiritual Regeneration Movement was dropped with the change of image. There are roughly 400 World Plan centers in the U.S. The movement keeps itself alive through systematic lecture programs. A TM university was started in Iowa in 1971.

In this system, god is Brahman, the impersonal god of the Hindus. To avoid using Brahman’s name, Maharishi calls him the Creative Intelligence. The idea of TM, then, is to meditate to bring oneself into an awareness of God. The meditation techniques use a mantra as a form of prayer. Man’s problem is not sin but separation from the Creative Intelligence. Salvation occurs as the person raises himself above the level of consciousness. This occurs in seven steps. Each person is left to work out his own karma, clearly making TM a system of works, self-salvation.

## In Perspective

Two observations, one good and one bad, may be made at this point.

It is easy to note that all of the world religions qualify as cults when the three essential doctrines are used as the standard. While not all view God as an impersonal force, almost all have a pantheistic view, the all-in-all. This excludes any concept of the Trinity. Salvation is by works and deeds, much of it in the form of rituals.

A more interesting development in modern times is the recognition of Jesus as part of the growth process of the cycle of reincarnation. Where ancient views of Hinduism or Buddhism gave no place to Christ, the modern view is to see Jesus as one who is unique, indeed, more unique than other men. For example, the Hare Krishnas see Jesus as the son of Krishna, but not a reincarnation of Krishna. He is more unique than any other man could strive to attain. But, clearly, this is not the Jesus of the Bible.

For the evangelical, ecumenical community, the insertion of Jesus provides a mechanism, however, for commencing a discussion as to the “best” way to find peace with God. Jesus provides a springboard to address the issues of a personal, caring God who sent His only Son so that man could, indeed, find peace in this life, as well as the life beyond. To the follower of an Eastern Religion, the endless cycle of reincarnation is potentially overpowering. Christ can be shown as the great alternative.

On the negative side, the introduction of Eastern Religions into Western society has produced an amazing array of syncretistic religions which mix the East with the West producing cults that have a broad base of beliefs. This has helped immensely in developing the move to New Age.

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## New Age or Old Deceit?

HOTELS FULL, ANIMALS LEFT HOMELESS  
Animal Rights Activists Enraged by Insensitive Couple  
~ on the birth of Christ

PREACHER STEALS CHILD'S LUNCH  
Disciples Mystified Over Behavior  
~ on the feeding of the 5,000

WETLANDS TRAMPLED IN LABOR STRIKE  
Pursuing Environmentalists Killed  
~ on the crossing of the Red Sea

Biblical Headlines as composed by Today's Media<sup>243</sup>

We have spent a great deal of time looking at the major "Christian" cults of the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Christian Science, as well as the groups that seem to grow out of these entities. We also spent a great deal of time on the philosophy of liberalism and the Eastern Religions. The New Age movement is the last step between all of these earlier groups and the one-world religion of The Anti-Christ. Do not think that I am prophesying the Rapture is just around the corner. It took Satan several hundred, indeed, thousands of years to set the stage for New Age to come into vogue. Yet, what we have now is a loose band of followers who are lumped together under a single title, even though they have little or no direct relationship with each other. Only God knows how long it will take this flock of disbelievers to congeal into a single body.

The "headlines" are funny, but very close to the truth as one reviews today's newspapers and watches the television. While God has used several of the major tragedies over the past couple of years to bring the Gospel message to the forefront, the entertainment industry is clearly anti-God.

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<sup>243</sup>email jokes from [mikey-funnies-owner@youthspecialties.com](mailto:mikey-funnies-owner@youthspecialties.com), April 11, 2000



As is most of the world . . .

The New Age movement has been described by at least one reviewer as a sponge which seeks to absorb all of the religions, cultures, and governments of the world into a single organism. A better description of Satan's final plans could not be more carefully drafted. New Age is the culmination of man's global union. It is the unexpected result of tolerance and pluralism, for if, at first, men agree all roads lead to God, then the structure is in place to mold the path along which they should travel. This path is New Age. This is the threat to Christianity in the century to come.

## The Height of Evolution

In a sense, this movement is the next step in evolution. It is, admittedly, a spiritual step, but one needed to arrive at a one world religion. The New Age Movement seeks to create a unified spiritual-socio-economic unity among all people. All systems combine on that single path to God, a path that has more entrances than anyone is able to count. What the path will exclude is Jesus Christ as He is described in the pages of Scripture.

In another sense, New Age is as old as sin.

### Genesis 3:1-6

*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden;<sup>3</sup> "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.<sup>5</sup> "For God knows that in the day you eat of it **your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**"<sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it **was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise**, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

When Adam and Eve listened to the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, they elevated themselves above God. They made themselves little gods. Satan has maintained that strategy throughout the centuries since the Fall. Now, as we look at New Age, the circle has almost been completed. We are, in a sense, back in the Garden of Eden. The Devil is about to complete his deception of most of the world.

New Age prophet David Spangler is quoted as saying "Lucifer works within each of us to bring us to wholeness, and as we move into a new age, which is the age of

man's wholeness, each of us in some way is brought to the point which I term the Luciferic initiation."<sup>244</sup>

Even *Time* has recognized that New Age is not new – “Even *Time* magazine has called the New Age ‘a combination of spirituality and superstition, fad and farce, about which the only thing certain is that it is not new.’”<sup>245</sup>

## Satan's Flaws

There are four flaws to the presentation of New Age. Keep them in mind as we review this final assault on the church:

- ✍ You will be like God
- ✍ You shall surely not die
- ✍ You will know good and evil
- ✍ Your eyes will be opened

What we find is that the New Age religion is truly the religion of man. Objective truth and moral responsibility are fading concepts. Self is the center of the religion and in one form or another, all of the groups fitting under the New Age umbrella find man becoming God. This creates opposing world views and religious systems – Man versus God. The appeal of New Age is that it “seems right” to the Populus.<sup>246</sup> The evolution of religion has, over the past 400 years, brought man to the point where experience is the measuring rod of all things. Things that are “good” are accepted as correct. Shirley MacLaine and John Denver have made New Age a household concept. Before his death, Denver was quoted as saying, “You will be like god. One of these days I will be so complete I won't be human. I will be god.”<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup>Kerry D. McRoberts, *New Age or Old Lie?*, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1989, 78, quoting David Spangler, *Reflections on the Christ*, London: Farres, Scotland: Lecture Series, 1978, 44.

<sup>245</sup>Walter Martin, Hank Hanegraaff, Gen. Ed., *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997, Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1997, Parsons Technology, Inc., PO Box 100, Hiawatha, Iowa., Chapter 11, quoting from *Time Magazine*, December 7, 1987, 62.

<sup>246</sup>At least one authority claims that Hindu teachings include the idea that experiences of divinity are encountered through expertly guided sexual exercises. What great appeal this has to the lusts of men. The holy prostitution of ancient paganism has been reborn in the Goddesses of Mother Nature and the earth. It is any wonder moral responsibility has disappeared in favor of the sensual? Kenneth Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*, USA: Victor Books, 1977, 1990.

<sup>247</sup>Edward F. Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* [computer file], electronic ed. of the revised and updated edition, Logos Library System, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1977, c1996

There is no “history” of the New Age movement in the sense comparable to the other cults.<sup>248</sup> Individual groups may have a particular history, but New Age is a philosophical collection of writings and groups, with, perhaps, major philosophers driving the development of the movement. New Age is a religion of liberalism, humanism, and pantheism. Paul encountered a version of humanists in the Epicureans and pantheists in the Stoics, on Mars Hill in Acts 17. The New Age has held on in various forms ever since, with one religion or cult, and then another, advocating some portions of the New Age philosophy. Then with the transitions from liberalism and humanism, and neo-orthodoxy, and post-modern philosophy, the cycle has been completed. Further, as a philosophical rather than religious concept, many of its tenets are accepted by Christians, without the believer ever realizing they are accepting the beliefs of a false religion.<sup>249</sup>

Eastern Religion has mixed with the culture of the Western world. New Age takes the concepts of each and melds them into a new single umbrella which encompasses all, yet, fails to accept any complete system, thus, creating a new one. Experience is king. Man rules, and Jesus is left in the dust, except as a good man!

## The Arguments of New Age

Look at the general concepts of New Age:

- ✍ Pantheism – God is all and all is God.
- ✍ Philosophical monism – Only one essence in the universe.
- ✍ Holism – If there is only one essence, and nature is God and God is nature, then, again, at a philosophical level all is God. Thus, religion and philosophy meld.

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by Edward F. Murphy, quoting *Newsweek*, “The Wiz of Show Biz,” December 20, 1976, 68.

<sup>248</sup>Lutzer cites Texe Marrs to the effect that there are 30 New Age rituals and beliefs which may be found in the pagan religions of ancient Babylon of 3,000 years ago. Erwin W. Lutzer and John F. DeVries, *Satan’s Evangelistic Strategy for this New Age*, USA: Victor Books, 1989, 24, quoting Texe Marrs, *Dark Secrets of the New Age*, Westchester, IL: Crossways Books, 1987, 26.

<sup>249</sup>*Kingdom of the Cults* sees New Age as the growth of Theosophy and three of its off-shots. “From Theosophy came (1) Anthroposophy, founded in 1912 by Rudolf Steiner; (2) the Arcane School, founded in 1923 by Alice Bailey; and (3) the “I AM” sects, which began to appear in the 1930s. These related branches of spirituality eventually spawned even more groups, which in turn created countless others.” Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults (Revised)*, Electronic Edition, Chapter 11. However, this is probably too narrow of a view.

- ✍ Self-deification – this is based upon the conclusions of what has come before – Pantheism plus monism plus holism equals man being part of god, thus, man is deified.
- ✍ Mysticism – Godhood is obtainable if you look far enough inside yourself. To quote Shirley MacLaine: “We are all god. But we forgot it. We have fallen into amnesia and we need to awaken from it by transcendental meditation. Godhood is obtainable by mystical experience.”<sup>250</sup>
- ✍ Reincarnation – because we have to learn to be God.
- ✍ Illusion – because good and evil are one and the same thing, because all is all.
- ✍ Animism – or if you will, the universe itself is alive because it is spirit because all is all, and all is spirit.
- ✍ Evolution – because we are all growing into gods.

New Agers are optimistic – but then, wouldn’t you be too if you were eventually going to be God? And, besides, holistic health, alternative methods of treatments, and stores dedicated solely to vitamins and other remedies of Mother Nature are the watchword of a society which wants to discover the Fountain of Youth. Sin is rejected as the source of disease and aging. Boa quotes G. K. Chesterton: “Those who worship health cannot remain healthy. To be healthy is good, but health is not an absolute good.”<sup>251</sup>

Another part of the New Age movement is the marriage of psychology to religion. Secular society assumes man is the product of blind evolution. There is no sin, on problems. Man has the resources within himself to resolve his problems. This power is helped and supported by education. Man must accept himself just as he is. Man must learn to love despite his short comings. How much of this has seeped into the “feel good” prosperity preaching of the church?

## New World Order

In practical terms, New Age is the new world order. We can see it today in the growth of the position of the United Nations in world affairs. There is a New Age meditation center at the UN. Presidents use the phrase “new world order.”<sup>252</sup> Satan must be rolling in laughter to know that he is deceiving everyone. The reason for the deception is that New Age is much more than a religion. It is a world movement combining religious, philosophical, political, and financial systems which enables it to bring together people of all religions and non-religious groups. This is the aspect

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<sup>250</sup>Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* [computer file], quoting Norman Geisler lecture series 1990.

<sup>251</sup>Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*, 27.

<sup>252</sup>Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* [computer file].

of globalism, social evolution. The world is one big village and the entire human race will become one.

New Age is the mix of Eastern Religion, Western Technology, and everyone's philosophy. It is syncretism at its finest. Remember syncretism is the combining of different forms of beliefs and practices. This is what New Age accomplishes, or, at least, is on its way to accomplishing. New Age is a demonic, counterfeit, false religious system which gives no place to Jesus Christ. At its heart, it is occultic in origin, mixing a variety of Satanic concepts with the philosophy of the East. At the heart of all of these is the cosmic force, the mystical spiritual energy, The Force of *Star Wars*.

Along with a portrayal of New Age ideas in numerous movies comes an almost overwhelming obsession with UFOs<sup>253</sup> and extraterrestrial life. The aliens become part of the channeling or spiritual messaging system of the New Age religion<sup>254</sup> and, oddly enough, the message from space is amazing similar to the goal of the New Agers – a unified peaceful society. “Man is on the brink of tremendous changes and breakthrough, and ONLY New Age Man, transformed man, can make it through to a new world and a spiritually sane existence.”<sup>255</sup>

According to the most recent surveys and sources, the majority of Americans, including many conservative religious leaders, believe that UFOs are real. But the question is not “Are they real?” Rather, the question is “What are they?” UFO incidents seemingly involve communications between aliens and humans in a form which the Bible clearly condemns as demonic or occultic. This means that UFOs are not extraterrestrial, but of the demonic spirit world. UFOs are the tool of Satan. Tom Wolfe, chronicler of American culture, has called UFOlogy a religion. “And that religion is, at bottom, not terribly different from most other new religions of the past two millennia. Most of them, the successful ones as well as those that have vanished, have been based on the belief that there exists Another Order, invisible to the great mass of humanity.”<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>253</sup>UFO is an “unidentified flying object.” The title comes from the early days following the Second World War. The concept covers weather balloons to flying saucers to the fleet of *Star Wars*, at least in the minds of most Americans. Anything in the sky which is not immediately identified is a UFO.

<sup>254</sup>Channeling is the New Age version of speaking to the spirits. Instead of using a medium like Spiritism, New Age uses “channels” to the spirit world. This is the same old practice with a new name and package.

<sup>255</sup>William M. Alnor, *UFOs in the New Age*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992, 14, quoting Wayne Aho, as found in Brad Steiger, *The Fellowship*, New York: Ballantine, 1989, 161.

<sup>256</sup>Alnor, *UFOs in the New Age*, 85, quoting Tom Wolfe, foreword, *In Advance of the Landing: Folk Concepts of Outer Space*, by Douglas Curran, New York: Abbeville Press, 1985.

Interestingly enough, many New Age groups see an end time “rapture,” or something similar. For example, in the early 1990s, Solara claimed to be an angel and proclaimed that if 144,000 followers would unite in concerted prayer (“conscious Oneness”), the “doorway” would open to the Golden Era – and it would remain open until December 21, 2011!

John the Apostle wrote “*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world*” (1 John 4:1). Some writers against UFOism see in this passage a warning against listening to the aliens. The entire context of John’s letter is directed at the false teachers he and his readers faced. If the false teachers could preach from a “spirit” which denied the deity of Jesus, then this proved their falseness. The same may be said of the “aliens” of today – spiritual or human!

## Modern Roots

At its heart too, one may see the merging over the past four hundred years of the philosophy of the Theosophy Society with the little god concept of the Mormons and the power of the Christian Science Mind.<sup>257</sup> East meets West. Science meets the humanities. Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “Imagination is more important than knowledge. By our imaginations we have the power to do or to be anything we desire.”<sup>258</sup> The stars of Hollywood, both in movies and on television, as well as in print, are attempting to convince us of this. School systems change their approach, parents are indoctrinated by their children. Seminars replace church services.<sup>259</sup> Slowly, the philosophy has crept into theology and the churches. Liberalism opens the door to a looser view of the Bible. It is a simple step to accept the miracles of experience as more important than God’s Word. Then, experience moves to be the guide of all.

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<sup>257</sup> Alnor, *Ibid*, 111, cites the story that H.P. Blavatsky’s messages came from “aliens” tying Theosophy directly into UFOism. It is clear that Blavatsky believed she talked with spirits, but there is nothing in any of the historical accounts of Theosophy which ties these spirits with extraterrestrial beings, just with members of the spirit world. Alnor also cites a source to the effect that Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, believed the Moon was inhabited. And, of course, Mormonism teaches that God came from another planet. To this extent, Mormonism can be viewed as directly connecting to the UFO concept. And then, of course, there is Scientology .

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<sup>258</sup> Murphy, *Handbook for Spiritual Warfare* [computer file].

<sup>259</sup> For example, there is EST, the Erhard Seminars Training which has been described as an irrational procedure in which the individual is emotionally driven to break all ties to the external God or objective morality. EST commenced in 1984 and is now franchised through Transformational Technologies, Inc. Boa, *Cults, World Religions, and the Occult*, 259.

Note, too, the merger of matter and spirit into one essence is a modification of gnosticism. This circle is complete in what one writer calls neo-gnosticism, the idea that life is moving up rather than down. The Fall, if there was one, was an involuntary descent of God into matter. Now, that event is being undone. The spirit world is “good” and a major part of the New Age motif is an effort to contact this world to help “poor man” merge with the cosmic spirit.

Best of all, from the world’s view point, New Agers are not all the same. Individual differences may be maintained throughout this process. Some are militant. Some are assuredly demon possessed. All are driven by the concept of counter-culture. Some are religious, some are not. The majority are spiritually empty. All are looking for something more.

In the end, New Age is nothing more than the original lie of the Garden of Eden repackaged in shiny, bright new paper!

## In Perspective

The church stands at an amazing crossroads in history. Never before has the movement of the world been so obviously unified against God. But, with the merging of all religions, the need for spiritual fulfillment is obvious. The disguises of Satan have run their course. His strategies have run their course. It is time for the church to fight back. New Age is Satan’s final attack on the church. Christ assured his disciples that the gates of hell could not stand against the attack of the church.<sup>260</sup> Now is the time to attack.

Witnessing to a New Ager is not much different from many of the “normal” evangelistic efforts we put forth. The New Ager has bought into the false spirituality of secular religion. He is hungry for spiritual fulfillment. The trick is to get him to listen to God’s Word long enough for the Holy Spirit to work in his life. The New Ager accepts the concept of God. The issue is “Who is God?”

Don’t go for the “kill” immediately upon winning a point. While there is no organizational tree to chop down, there will still be differences in definitions of terms. Make certain both you and the unbeliever are talking the same language. Use rhetorical questions to get him to “define” areas of discussion. Questions like, what do you think redemption means? Or, did Jesus die on the Cross? Use these types of questions to point the New Ager toward the objective truth of the Bible. Be prepared

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<sup>260</sup>**Matthew 16:18-19:** *18 “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”*

to give answers for your faith in Jesus. Use your personal testimony. Avoid mocking or attacking the individual elements or proponents of New Age.

And remember, our job is to sow and water the seeds. God gives the increase!<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:6.



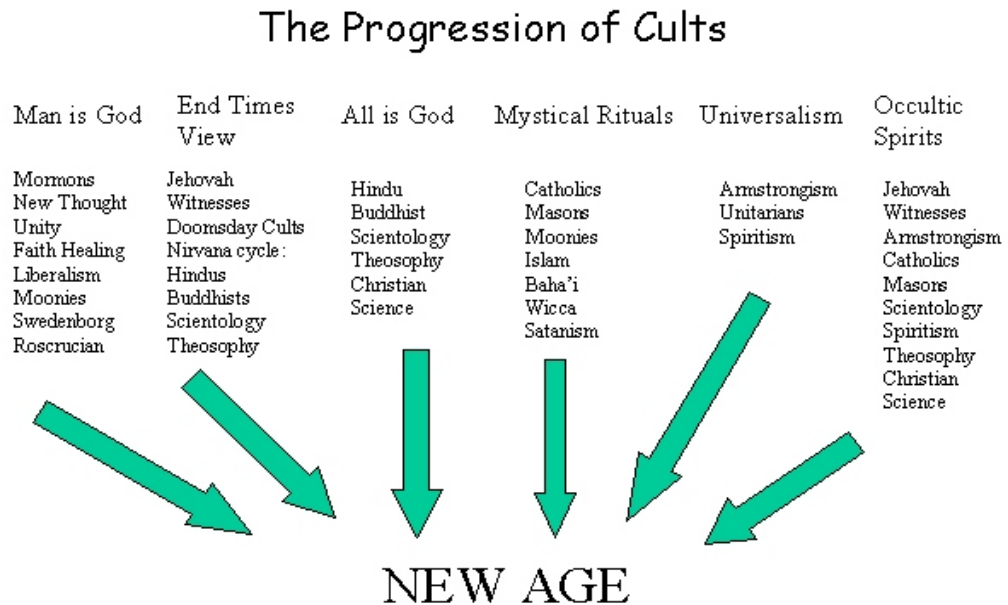
## New Age In A Nutshell

New Age beliefs are not much different from many we have encountered over the past several weeks. The difference, perhaps, is that the umbrella of New Age is able to protect so many different groups.

- ✍ **God** is an impersonal force which is both good and evil. God is all.
- ✍ The universe (**reality**) is one undifferentiated whole.
- ✍ **Jesus** is a man who took on the Christ office and demonstrates God in man. Many New Agers will accept the concept that Jesus died and was reincarnated, but not resurrected.
- ✍ **Man** is God. Man is basically good and basically spirit. The body is reincarnated until one's **works** ("karma") are sufficient to make man a god.
- ✍ **Salvation** is the transformation of consciousness.
- ✍ All roads lead to God (**pluralism**).
- ✍ The **Bible** is just another in a long series of religious good books. Revelation is a hindrance to spiritual growth.
- ✍ **Eschatology** is man giving birth to a New Age

# The Progression of the Cults

All of the cults have a variety of characteristics. In simple chart form it is not possible to classify all of them. However, if New Age is a religion which sees either man or everything as God, has a view to the end times through reincarnation, arriving at Nirvana or the like, practices a variety of rituals and occultic customs, talks with the spirits, and believes in a universalism, then consider the following means that Satan has used to accomplish this.



Satan is hard at work trying to win. It all merges in the final “world” religion ultimately destroyed by God (Rev 13:11-18; 17).

Is this New Age?

## Reflections

The [Christian] “doctrines” are translations into our concepts and ideas of that which God has already expressed in language more adequate, namely the actual incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.

C. S. Lewis, a letter  
(1898-1963)<sup>262</sup>

### Christianity’s Relics

Here are some of the “relics” considered authentic in apostate Christianity:

- Hair of the Virgin in churches in Naples and Rome.
- Her Wedding Ring in Cathedral Perugia.
- Her Holy Girdle at church in Prato.
- Drops of the Virgin’s Milk are kept in the church of San Gaudioso e Patrizio at Naples and at St. Mary of the People at Rome.
- The Holy Basin used at the Last Supper is kept in the Cathedral of St. Lorenzo at Genoa.
- The Lance which pierced Jesus’ side, Veronica’s Veil with Christ’s features imprinted, and the Head of St. Andrew are all kept in the four massive piers which support St. Peter’s dome.
- Christ’s burial sheet is in Turin’s Cathedral of St. John the Baptist.
- The rectangular marble stone with Christ’s footprints is kept in the Church of St. Sebastian, Rome.
- Three shoulder blades, four legs, five arms, 50 index fingers all supposedly that of John the Baptist, which pointed to the Lamb of God plus 13 heads are claimed all over the continent.<sup>263</sup>

Who is right and who is wrong? How is the answer determined?

A cult is a religion which does not recognize Jesus Christ as God and Savior of the world. This is a simpler definition than we started with, but it is an accurate

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<sup>262</sup>Taken from email Christian Quotation of the Day, [cqod-owner@lists.gospelcom.net](mailto:cqod-owner@lists.gospelcom.net), April 24, 2000.

<sup>263</sup>Tan, Paul Lee, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996.

definition of any religious group which does not accept the Bible as the inerrant word of God and Jesus Christ as the incarnate, crucified, resurrected God-man.

And, when one does not accept such a premise, false doctrines and religions arise. There is ample demonstration of this fact in the pages of the Bible. There are even more examples in history. The modern landscape is awash with false doctrine and views. Consider the following excerpts from *World* magazine:

Sekhmet, with the body of a woman and the head of a lion, is the Egyptian goddess of fertility. When Texas oil heiress Genevieve Vaughan visited Egypt with her husband, she came across a statue of Sekhmet and made a vow: If the ancient fertility goddess would help her have a baby, she would build a temple in her honor. . . .”Lo and behold, I got pregnant that very month,” said Ms. Vaughan. That was 35 years ago. . . . In 1993, the temple was finally built in Nevada on 22 acres, just off Route 95, the main highway between Las Vegas and Reno. Built by an all-female construction crew . . . along with images of other goddesses, is the idol of Sekhmet, made of fiberglass. There is also a full-time priestess – Wicca-devotee and former sex therapist Patricia Pearlman – who leads weekly rituals for 20 to 30 followers.

As Christianity becomes less of a presence in the culture, the ancient pagan religions are rushing into the void. Progressives had always assumed that once Christianity faded, people would do without religion entirely. But this was naive. Without an advanced religion like Christianity, people are reverting to what came before, to nature worship, neo-animism, and primitive superstitions.<sup>264</sup>

But, fiberglass? The idols must be disappointed not to be made of studier stuff like gold and silver!

And what of the ancient past?

#### **Isaiah 14:12-13**

*12 “How you are fallen from heaven,  
O Lucifer, son of the morning!  
How you are cut down to the ground,  
You who weakened the nations!  
13 For you have said in your heart:  
‘I will ascend into heaven,  
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;  
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation  
On the farthest sides of the north;*

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<sup>264</sup>*World*, Gene Edward Veith, “A God in their own Image,” May 6, 2000, 16.

Lucifer fell trying to become God. Now, he has convinced millions over the ages that they, too, can become God. All, in the end, will follow the same path. Nothing has changed.

Consider the cults and world religions we have covered in this study –

Then, consider that in 1917, William Irvine’s book, *Heresies Exposed*<sup>265</sup>, covers 24 groups. Twenty-three of those groups match groups in our study!

The, consider that in 1949, Charles S. Braden’s book, *These Also Believe*<sup>266</sup>, has 13 groups. Twelve of the thirteen groups match groups in our study!

Truly, nothing has changed. The tricks of Satan remain constant during the centuries. He has just used new people and new packaging to present the same ideas.

As I indicated in the progression chart immediately preceding this chapter, I believe Satan has used the past four-to-five hundred years to create the structure for bringing all of the false religions into a single unit. In the East, the various look-alike sects of Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism have taken on some Christian traits. Jesus has now become a part of their vocabulary and teaching.

In the West, the progression has been somewhat slower.

- ✍ The Enlightenment makes man the measuring standard.
- ✍ Rationalism makes human reason a god.
- ✍ Existentialism does away with knowledge, elevating experience to new highs.
- ✍ The post-modern philosophy disbands objective truth.
- ✍ All of this means that Christianity has lost all of its influence.

This does not mean that Christianity is dead. Elijah, both exhilarated and exhausted from his battle with the prophets of Baal, trembled at the words of Jezebel and ran for the hills. When God questions the prophet, Elijah rehearses his accomplishments and, then, pleads his exhaustion as the only man of God left on the planet. God’s response is “nonsense!”

### **1 Kings 19:18**

*18 “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”*

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<sup>265</sup>Irvine, William C., *Heresies Exposed*, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc., Bible Truth Depot, 1917.

<sup>266</sup>Braden, Charles S., *These Also Believe*, New York: MacMillan Company, 1949.

So, too, today, you have many brothers and sisters in Christ who have not bowed to Satan. Together, you represent the remnant of God! But it is only through the power of God that you may accomplish great victory. Only God can overcome the depths of sin. But, He depends upon our help, strange as that may sound.

### **John 15:5**

*"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

To abide in Jesus not only means walking in devotion and obedience, it means understanding what you read in the Bible. It means knowing doctrine. As we have hopefully emphasized in this course, to know doctrine provides the basis against which you may first detect a cult, and then, win the cult member to Christianity. While in times past this task was made easier by the fact that everyone was familiar with the Bible and believed it to be from God, today in Western society, such is, sadly, not the case.

"In one of his essays William Placher comments on a time when the theological use of the Bible presupposed a deep knowledge of what the Bible says."<sup>267</sup> Today, ministers, evangelists, cultists, leaders of world religion, and the man on the street may quote the Bible, but none of them have the vaguest idea of the theological meaning behind the verses they are quoting. The knowledgeable Christian cannot appeal to the Bible for support since

- ✍ many people have never read the Bible
- ✍ they have not read the Bible because they do not believe in God nor in the fact that the Bible is His Word
- ✍ what they do know about the Bible is wrong

It is difficult to fight against such a backdrop.

C. S. Lewis uses the example of a condemned man approaching the judge, knowing the judge is in control. In other words, ancient man approached God knowing God was God. Now, man has God as the accused and man is on the bench.<sup>268</sup> This is the theology of modern times. Man judges God. This has profound theological implications about not only religion, but life in general. Consider the following observation about the German response to the Nazi Holocaust.

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<sup>267</sup>D.A. Carson, *The Gagging of God*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1996, 193, citing William E. Placher, "Why Bother with Theology?" *Christian Century* 111/4, February 2-9, 1994, 105.

<sup>268</sup>C. S. Lewis, Walter Hooper, ed., *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970.

Having imbibed a humanitarian and therapeutic gospel, ordinary German civilians “knew” that basically good human beings could not do such a thing. One of the great ironies of our century must be that in the era in which more “hell on earth” has occurred than ever before, doctrines such as sin, hell, and the wrath of God have lost their meaning in the church on an unprecedented scale.<sup>269</sup>

This is pluralism and liberalism at work in the lives of the world. All roads lead to God. But, which God?

Doctrine says the God of the Bible is transcendent,<sup>270</sup> sovereign, and personal, all at the same time. But as Carson acknowledges, “in the rising press of religious pluralism, this understanding of God is *never* allowed.”<sup>271</sup>

Cults abound, but Satan is attempting to pull all religions in a tightening grip upon Christianity. We see it in the cults and we see it in culture. Not only do the cults fight us, but the fight is also within the churches as doctrines are watered and the New Age concept that God is love (and not much else) has moved into the pulpits of Bible believing churches. The battle lines are formed. All other religions are moving toward the center and unity. The circle is almost complete. Now Satan will strive to make the circle smaller, stamping out Christianity in the process. Take heart – Satan has already lost!

On the other hand, the battle will become more and more difficult while we remain on earth. In philosophy, three new terms have been used – exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. We have discussed pluralism throughout. Let me close with a quote from Carson on all three. Definitions in a nutshell –

Briefly, exclusivism is the view that only those who place their faith in the Christ of the Bible are saved; inclusivism is the view that all who are saved are saved on account of the person and work of Jesus Christ, but that conscious faith in Jesus Christ is not absolutely necessary; some may be saved by him who have never heard of him, for they may respond positively to the light they have received. And pluralism is the view that all religions have the same moral and spiritual value, and

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<sup>269</sup>Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 219, quoting Kendall S. Harmon, “Correspondence,” *Expository Times*, Vol. 105, 1994, 247.

<sup>270</sup>Transcendence is the attribute of God which says He is above everything. He is in heaven and we are here on earth. God is outside of time and space, while man is inside of time and space. For example, Deuteronomy 4:39: *Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.*

<sup>271</sup>Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 223. The emphasis is mine.

offer the same potential for achieving salvation, however “salvation” be construed.<sup>272</sup>

This is the cult of the 2000s. It is a cult which says, everyone is a member, except those who believe Jesus is the only path to salvation. But Christianity is exclusive. You are exclusive. You are a child of God. And Jesus Himself said He is the only way to God.

#### **John 14:6**

*Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

- ▶ Shakespeare calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you literature."
- ▶ Browning calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you poetry."
- ▶ Kant calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you philosophy."
- ▶ Sartre calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you existentialism."
- ▶ Freud calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you psychoanalysis."
- ▶ The medical profession calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you health."
- ▶ The newspaper calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you information."
- ▶ The motion picture industry calls and says: "Come unto me, and I will give you entertainment."
- ▶ The advertisers call and say: "Come unto me, and I will give you better living."
- ▶ Jesus calls us to salvation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor." (Matt 11:28)<sup>273</sup>

#### **Matthew 11:28-30**

*28 “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

And if you have not found the way to God the Father through the path offered by the Son Jesus Christ, turn the page . . .

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<sup>272</sup>Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 278.

<sup>273</sup>H.S. Vigeveno, *Jesus the Revolutionary*, Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, a division of G/L Publications, 1966, 66.



**. . . If you want to know Jesus**

**Ephesians 2:10**

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,  
which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

***You are a sinner.***

*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

**Romans 3:23**

***The only result of sin is death.***

*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal  
life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Romans 6:23**

***Note that salvation is the gift of God and may not be achieved by man any other way.***

*8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of  
yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man  
should boast.*

**Ephesians 2:8,9**

***You must repent of your sins.***

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be  
blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the  
presence of the Lord;*

**Acts 3:19**

***Repentance comes from confession of sin.***

*9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,  
and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him  
from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man  
believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession  
is made unto salvation.*

**Romans 10:9,10**

***Receive the gift of salvation which is yours through Jesus Christ.***

*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

**John 20:31**

***Pray to God the Father for your salvation:***

Father God, I know that I am a sinner and in need of your help. I cannot help myself nor come to you except through the blood of Jesus Christ. I hereby repent of my sins, even though they are so many that I cannot name them. I hereby accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I look forward to the power of your indwelling Holy Spirit. Thank you for being there to help me, a poor sinner. Thank you. Amen.

**If you have prayed the above prayer in sincerity and honesty of heart, WELCOME TO THE FAMILY OF GOD. MAY GOD RICHLY BLESS YOUR WALK OF FAITH.**

***Now . . .***

***Join a good, gospel driven church.***

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

**Hebrews 10:25**

***Get baptized as a public confession of your faith.***

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:*

**Matthew 28:19**

***Put your faith to work through the obedience to God's Word.***

*Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.*

**James 2:17**