

CULTS AND OCCULTS

An Overview

Deuteronomy 18:10-11; 1 Timothy 4:1

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WHAT IS A CULT?

A cult is a system of religious beliefs and rituals that is regarded as unorthodox or spurious, with a great devotion to a person, idea, or thing. (Webster's Dictionary)

So a cult is a religious group which differs significantly from the churches that are considered as the normative expressions of religion in our culture. A cult often has – or had in the past – a charismatic leader who is or was strong authority for the believers and has or had a strong influence on the religious teachings of that group.

Cults often have very strong doctrines that make it very difficult for a cult member to leave. All cults have in common that they deny the fact that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Some are very explicit about this and are thus easy to recognize – they are what we call “*Non-Christian Cults*”. Others seem to believe almost the same as we do but if we look closer we see that their teachings are in fact quite different from what we know as the true word of God – that’s why we call them “*Pseudo-Christian Cults*”.

Although still a minority in today’s society, cults seem to offer something that the mainstream religions cannot provide. Essentially, they ensnare people in two ways:

1. One way is to appeal to the pride of human beings through a rationalistic philosophy. Their doctrines sound modern and give their followers the feeling that through following them they will become “someone important”. They offer *higher or secret knowledge* that is supposed to make their followers special and to give them powers beyond the usual human capabilities.
2. The other way is to stimulate the superstitions that many people already carry in themselves. In fact, only a few unsaved people really believe that what they see in this world is all there is. Instead they assume that there must be some supernatural force or being which is there to either help or threaten them. Many cults appeal to that kind of belief and offer a religious system based on all kinds of superstitions which they call “faith”.

WHAT IS FALSE RELIGION?

Any religion that denies any of the truth in the Bible is a false religion, which includes both *non-Christian cults* and *pseudo-Christian cults*.

WHAT IS THE OCCULT?

The noun '*occult*'—used with 'the' as in '*the occult*'—means spiritual practices involving 'hidden' spiritual mysteries and the supernatural, thus *occultism*. Used as an adjective, for our purposes, occult means 'of or relating to the occult'.

Occult practice has certain characteristics, one or more of which may be present in varying degrees:

1. Occult practice includes seeking God or truth beyond nature, reason and the rational mind—that is, in the supernatural realm.
2. Occult practice is based on a belief that communion with God comes through subjective, supernatural experience.
3. Occult practice involves seeking supernatural energy, spirits, power, presence, influence, action or enchantments.

Another way of explaining it is: the occult involves humans by their own efforts and outside biblical means attempting to pierce the veil between the natural and the supernatural. These efforts might be part of a misguided quest for God and truth, or stem from a desire for feelings of peace and love that sometimes come during occult experience (being manifestations of the angel of light). They might be part of a search for supernatural power to help people or even to hurt them (so-called black magic), or to develop occult powers such as the ability to tell the future, discern people's illnesses, heal people magically, or be enthralled by signs and wonders.

Often, especially in mysticism, occult practice requires altered consciousness. The rational mind needs to be turned off; this is one aspect of *seeking beyond reason and the rational mind* and can be accomplished through so-called 'quieting' the mind in meditation, seeking a 'still' or visualized place where you can 'go', dulling the mind through chanting or drumming, taking drugs, or attempting to set a mystical mood with music. Through altered consciousness, Satan gains access to the mind, and through the mind he moves on our hearts, souls and even our bodies, where he or his demons somehow evoke feelings of peace or love, or cause manifestations such as jerking, vomiting, electrical currents, etc. Manifestations and feelings of love and peace are subjective experience aspects of occultism. Note, the Word of God has no place here.

A special word about mysticism, since it is gaining ground in the emerging Church and in so-called "contemplative prayer": One author describes it as follows, noting the typical characteristics of altered consciousness and seeking beyond the Word of God and beyond reason (or, as he puts it, "ordinary understanding"):

“Although defying exact definition because the practices and experiences of mystics are so various and mysterious, one dictionary defines mysticism as, ‘the doctrine of an immediate spiritual intuition of truths believed to transcend ordinary understanding, or of a direct, intimate union of the soul with God through contemplation and love.’ Note that in contrast to God revealing Himself in Scripture, mystical truth is individually, intimately, and immediately intuited through spiritual experiences.”

“In his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James identified four main characteristics of mystical experience: first, ineffability; second, noetic quality; third, transiency; and fourth, passivity. James also notes that absorption, fusion, or union of the individual into the Absolute, or deity, is “the great mystic achievement.” He adds, “In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness.” On this point, James apparently suggested a fifth characteristic of mysticism—absorption.”

Sometimes, Charismatics alter consciousness by quieting themselves and “waiting on a Word” so they can grasp at some supposed revelation from God and offer it as a prophesy. This is *seeking supernatural influence or power*, what the Bible calls divination. During such practice Satan takes this opportunity to plant his darts—visions, thoughts, lies, etc—in the mind. Such practice amounts to an open invitation to Satan to come and do his work in your mind.

Occultists find that active and intelligent use of the mind interferes with their experiences. Thus, they learn to disparage reason and the intellect. This is one of the ways Charismatics turn believers away from the Word of God; they seek experience over intelligent study of the Word. It is a sign of satanic influence when people disdain reason in spirituality. It is a sure sign when they discourage people from studying the Bible (“Legalist! Religious!”) and attempt to warn those who value truth and seek discernment that they are on the wrong path. (“You should be more loving!”). Satan wants us to disdain reason and discernment. This plays into his hands because a dull mind is easily manipulated. And he wants to keep us away from the Word of God because a mind unschooled in biblical thought is no threat: a person who does not know the Word is a soldier without a sword, an architect building on a foundation of sand.

Examples of occult practices

- Stilling or emptying the mind, meditating, focusing on one thought or object to attain a peaceful state or subjective spiritual experience.
- Visualizing the breath moving in unnatural ways.
- Speaking with the dead, including prayers to saints or entering trance states to speak with dead people, pets or Mother Mary (necromancy).
- Channeling spirits and prophesying in another voice.
- Channeling animal spirits: roaring like a lion, etc.

- Passing electrical currents or waves of heat through laying on hands (*pranic* healing).
- Speaking to demons or angels.
- Waving flags to keep demons away, or anointing with oil.
- Calling down a spirit to feel its ecstatic influence (soaking in the spirit, called *Samadhi* in yoga).
- Submit to a spirit so it can have its way with you (manifestations, spiritual drunkenness).
- Calling down spirit to work with it—dig in the heart, etc.
- Seeking supernatural knowledge from dreams or visions.
- Waiting for ‘prophetic words’ or supernatural insight into peoples’ illnesses or problems (taught in Alpha).
- Casting spells or curses.
- Breaking off spells or curses (reverse voodoo).
- Attempting to develop supernatural prophetic powers such as gifts of healing or prophetic gifts (divination).
- Developing spiritual eyes (called ‘opening the third eye’ in yoga) to see angels and demons (clairvoyance).
- Conjuring gold dust and ‘manna’ miracles (pure magic).
- Any activity or practice aiming to channel “supernatural power or strength” through human efforts

They are all counterfeits of biblical practice. Occult worship includes endless repetition of verses in a song or a prayer (chanting) so the meaning is lost and one enters into a dulled state.

The notion that one must gather at a Church under an anointed elder or pastor to meet with the Holy Spirit is occult. We are all priests under the New Covenant. God does not pour His Spirit through anointed individuals; this is occult doctrine. Jesus told us simply that where 2 or more gather in His name, He will be there. He did not say that where 2 or more gather with a priest or some other anointed leader that His Spirit would be poured out or transmitted through that leader. However, it appears demonic spirit can be transmitted through demonically anointed leaders.

THE TRUE CHURCH AND THE TRUE RELIGION IN THE BIBLE

Five Basic Teachings (Non-negotiables)

1. **THE TRINITY:** God is one "What" and three "Whos" with each "Who" possessing all the attributes of Deity and personality.

It is vitally important that all teachings in the Church affirm and teach the Trinity because so many doctrines of the Church would not be true without this basic understanding.

The one "What" and three "Whos" that make up our Almighty God together and separately are mentioned as having created the universe. This is one of the many proofs of the Trinity.

God ("What") created the universe: Gen. 1:1

Father ("Who") created the universe: Mal. 2:10, Mt. 25:34

Son ("Who") created the universe: Col. 1:15-16, Heb. 1:2, Mt. 13:35

Spirit ("Who") created the universe: Ps. 104:30, Job 33:4, Jn. 6:63

There are many direct proof texts in the New Testament for the Trinity.

Ga. 4:6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Jesus commanded:

Mt. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 1 John 5:7-9 For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.

King James Version adds:

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. (NKJ)

We also have this verse: 2 Cor. 13:14 [May] the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (NAS)

A very important proof is when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist:

Matt. 3:16-17 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Even in the Old Testament we find proof of two persons of the Triune nature of God.

Prov. 30:4 Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his

cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and the name of His son? Tell me if you know!

I. If there is only one God, one true God, all other gods being false gods, neither men nor angels being gods, and none even like God by nature - all of which the Bible says repeatedly and explicitly - then we must conclude that there is indeed only one God.

II - This One God Is Known In the OT as "Jehovah/Yahweh" ("The Lord")

- A. Texts where Jehovah is said to be elohim or el: Deut. 4:35, 39; Psa. 100:3; etc. Elohim is the plural form of "el" so even in the OT we see a picture of the Triune Godhead.
- B. Texts where the compound name "Jehovah God" (Yahweh Elohim) is used: Gen. 2:3; 9:26; 24:3; Ex. 3:15-18; 4:4; 2 Sam. 7:22, 25; etc.
- C. Only one Yahweh/Jehovah: Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29
- D. Conclusion: Jehovah is the only God, the only el/elohim

III - God Is a Unique, Incomprehensible Being

- A. Only one God, thus unique
- B. None are even like God
- C. God cannot be fully comprehended: 1 Cor. 8:2-3
- D. God can only be known insofar as the Son reveals Him: Matt. 11:25-27; John 1:18

E. Analogical language needed to describe God: Ezek. 1:26-28; Rev.

1:13-16

F. God is transcendent, entirely distinct from and different than the

universe, as the carpenter is distinct from the bench

- 1. Separate from the world: Isa. 40:22; Acts 17:24
- 2. Contrasted with the world: Psa. 102:25-27; 1 John 2:15-17
- 3. Created the world: Gen. 1:1; Psa. 33:6; 102:25; Isa. 42:5; 44:24; John

1:3; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 1:2; 11:3

IV - Is God One Person?

- A. God is one God (cf. I above), one Yahweh, one Lord (cf. II above), one Spirit (John 4:24)

B. However, the Bible never says that God is "one person"

1. Heb. 1:3 KJV speaks of God's "person," but the word used here, *hupostasis*, is translated "substance" in Heb. 11:1 KJV; also in Heb. 1:3 "God" refers specifically to the Father
2. Gal. 3:20 speaks of God as one party in the covenant between God and man, not as one person
3. Job 13:8 KJV speaks of God's "person," but ironically the Hebrew literally means "his faces"

C. The use of singular and plural pronouns for God

1. Over 7,000 times God speaks or is spoken of with singular pronouns (I, He, etc.); but this is proper because God is a single individual being; thus these singular forms do not disprove that God exists as three "persons" as long as these persons are not separate beings
2. At least four times in the OT God speaks of or to Himself using plural pronouns (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isa. 6:8), and non-trinitarian interpretation cannot account for them:
 - a. Plural reference to God and the angels possible in Isa. 6:8, but not in the Genesis texts; in 1:26 "our image" explained in 1:27, "in God's image"; in 3:22 "like one of us" refers back to 3:5, "like God"
 - b. The "literary plural" (possibly, though never clearly, attested in Paul) is irrelevant to texts in which God is speaking, not writing
 - c. The "plural of deliberation" is apparently unattested in biblical writings, and cannot explain Gen. 3:22 ("like one of us")
 - d. The "plural of amplitude" or of "fullness" (which probably does explain the use of the plural form *elohim* in the singular sense of "God") is irrelevant to the use of plural pronouns, and again cannot explain Gen. 3:22
 - e. The "plural of majesty" possibly attested in 1 Kgs. 12:9; 2 Chron. 10:9; more likely Ezra 4:18; but none of these are certain; and again, it cannot explain Gen. 3:22; also nothing in the context of the Gen. Texts suggests that God is being presented as King.

D. The uniqueness of God (cf. III above) should prepare us for the possibility

that the one divine Being exists uniquely as a plurality of persons

V - The Father of Jesus Christ Is God

- A. Explicit statements: John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; etc.
- B. The expression, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ": 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3

VI - Jesus Christ Is God

A. Explicit statements

1. Isa. 9:6; note 10:21. Translations which render "mighty hero," are inconsistent in their rendering of 10:21. Also note that Ezek. 32:21 is (a) not in the same context, as is Isa. 10:21, and (b) speaking of false gods, cf. I.G.5 above.
2. John 1:1 Even if Jesus is here called "a god" (as some have argued), since there is only one God, Jesus is that God. However, the "a god" rendering is incorrect. Other passages using the Greek word for God (theos) in the same construction are always rendered "God": Mark 12:27; Luke 20:38; John 8:54; Phil 2:13; Heb. 11:16. Passages in which a shift occurs from ho theos ("the God") to theos ("God") never imply a shift in meaning: Mark 12:27; Luke 20:37-38; John 2:13; Rom. 1:21; 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 4:10-11
3. John 1:18. The best manuscripts have "the unique God" (monogenes, frequently rendered "only-begotten," actually means "one of a kind," "unique," though in the NT always in the context of a son or daughter). Even if one translates "only-begotten," the idea is not of a "begotten god" as opposed to an "unbegotten god."
4. John 20:28. Compare Rev. 4:11, where the same construction is used in the plural ("our") instead of the singular ("my"). See also Psa. 35:23. Note that Christ's response indicates that Thomas' acclamation was not wrong. Also note that John 20:17 does show that the Father was Jesus' "God" (due to Jesus becoming a man), but the words "my God" as spoken by Thomas later in the same chapter must mean no less than in v. 17. Thus, what the Father is to Jesus in His humanity, Jesus is to Thomas (and therefore to us as well).
5. Acts 20:28: "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." The variant readings (e.g. "the church of the Lord") show that the original was understood to mean "His own blood," not "the blood of His own [Son]" (since otherwise no one would have thought to change it). Thus all other renderings are attempts to evade the startling clarity and meaning of this passage.
6. Rom. 9:5. While grammatically this is not the only possible interpretation, the consistent form of doxologies in Scripture, as well as the smoothest reading of the text, supports the identification of Christ as "God" in this verse.
7. Titus 2:13. Grammatically and contextually, this is one of the strongest proof texts for the deity of Christ. Sharp's first rule, properly understood, proves that the text should be translated "our great God and Savior" (cf. same construction in Luke 20:37; Rev. 1:6; and many other passages). Note also that Paul always uses the word "manifestation" ("appearing") of Christ: 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2. Tim. 1:10; 4:1,8

8. Heb. 1:8. The rendering, "God is your throne," is nonsense - God is not a throne, He is the one who sits on the throne! Also, "God is your throne," if taken to mean God is the source of one's rule, could be said about any angelic ruler - but Hebrews 1 is arguing that Jesus is superior to the angels.
9. 2 Pet. 1:1. The same construction is used here as in Titus 2:13; see the parallel passage in 2 Pet. 1:11; 2:20; 3:2, 18
- 10.1 John 5:20. Note that the most obvious antecedent for "this" is Jesus Christ. Also note that the "eternal life" is Christ, as can be seen from 1:2.

B. Jesus is Jehovah/Yahweh

1. Rom. 10:9-13: Note the repeated "for," which links these verses closely together. The "Lord" of 10:13 must be the "Lord" of 10:9,12
2. Phil. 2:9-11. In context, the "name that is above every name" is "Lord" (vs.11), i.e., Jehovah
3. Heb. 1:10: Here God the Father addresses the Son as "Lord," in a quotation from Psa. 102:25 (cf. 102:24, where the person addressed is called "God"). Since here the Father addresses the Son as "Lord," this cannot be explained away as a text in which a creature addresses Christ as God/ Lord in a merely representational sense
4. 1 Pet. 2:34: This verse is nearly an exact quotation of Psa. 34:8a, where "Lord" is Jehovah. From 1 Pet. 2:4-8 it is also clear that "the Lord" in v. 3 is Jesus
5. 1 Pet. 3:14-15: these verses are a clear reference to Isa. 8:12-13, where the one who is to be regarded as holy is Jehovah
6. Texts where Jesus is spoken of as the "one Lord" (cf. Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29): 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:5; cf. Rom. 10:12; 1 Cor. 12:5

C. Jesus has the titles of God

1. Titles belonging only to God

- a. The first and the last: Rev. 1:17; 22:13; cf. Isa. 44:6
- b. King of kings and Lord of lords: 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16

2. Titles belong in the ultimate sense only to God

- a. Savior: Luke 2:11; John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; Titus 2:13, cf. v. 10; etc.; cf. Isa. 43:11; 45:21-22; 1 Tim 4:10; on Jesus becoming the source of salvation; Heb. 5:9, cf. Ex. 15:2; Psa. 118:14, 21
- b. Shepherd: John 10:11; Heb. 13:20; cf. Psa. 23:1; Isa. 40:11
- c. Rock: 1 Cor. 10:4; cf. Isa. 44:8

D. Jesus received the honors due to God alone

1. Honor: John 5:23
2. Love: Matt. 10:37
3. Prayer: John 14:14 (text debated, but in any case it is Jesus who answers the prayer); Acts 7:59-60 (cf. Luke 23:34, 46); Rom. 10:12-13; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 12:8-10 (where "the Lord" must be Jesus, cf. v. 9), etc.
4. Worship (proskuneo): Matt. 28:17; Heb. 1:6 (cf. Psa. 97:7); cf. Matt 4:10
5. Religious or sacred service (latreuo): Rev. 22:13
6. Faith: John 3:16; 14:1; etc.

E. Jesus does the works of God

1. Creation: John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2; Rev. 3:14 (cf. 21:6 on "beginning"); on "through" and "in" cf. Rom. 11:36; Heb. 2:10; Acts 17:28; cf. also Isa. 44:24
2. Sustains the universe: Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3
3. Salvation:
 - a. In General: See C.2.a above
 - b. Forgives sins: Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26; note that
Jesus forgives sins not committed against Him.
4. All of them: John 5:17-29 (including judgment, cf. Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Cor. 5:10)

F. Jesus has all the incommunicable attributes of God

1. All of them: John 1:1; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Heb. 1:3
2. Self existent: John 5:26
3. Unchangeable: Heb. 1:10-12; 13:8
4. Eternal: John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:2
5. Omnipresent: Matt. 18:20; 28:20; John 3:13; Eph. 1:23; 4:10; Col. 3:11
6. Omniscient: John 16:30; 21:17; cf. 2:23-24
7. Incomprehensible: Matt. 11:25-27

G. Jesus is "equal with God"

1. John 5:18: Although John is relating what the Jews understood Jesus to be claiming, the context shows they were basically right: In v. 17 claimed to be exempt from the Sabbath along with His Father, and in 5:19-29

Jesus claimed to do all of the world of the Father and to deserve the same honor as the Father

2. Phil. 2:6: Jesus did not attempt to seize recognition by the world as being equal with God, but attained that recognition by humbling himself and being exalted by the Father (vv. 7-11)

H. Jesus is the Son of God

1. "Son" in Scripture can mean simply one possessing the nature of , whether literal or figurative (e.g. "Son of man," "sons of thunder," "sons of disobedience," cf. Mark 3:7; Eph. 2:1)
2. Usually when "son of" is used in relation to a person (son of man, son of Abraham, son of David, etc.) the son possesses the nature of his father
3. Jesus is clearly not the literal Son of God, i.e.. He was not physically procreated by God
4. On the other hand, Jesus is clearly the Son of God in a unique sense (cf. "only-begotten son," John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9) and in a preeminent sense (i.e. the term is more fitting for Him than for anyone else)
5. Scripture is explicit that the Son possesses God's essence or nature (cf. F. above)
6. Jesus' repeated claim to be the Son of God was consistently understood by the Jewish leaders as a blasphemous claim to equality with God, an understanding Jesus never denied: John 5:17-23; 8:58-59; 10:30-39; 19:7; Matt. 26:63-65
7. Jesus is therefore God's Son, not God's creation, God's servant, God's agent, etc.; Jesus is God's Son who became a servant for our sake and for the Father's glory (John 13:13-15; 17:4; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:4-13; 3:1-6; 5:8; etc.)

VII - The Holy Spirit Is God

A. Equated with God: Acts 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:17-18

B. Has the incommunicable attributes of God

1. Eternal: Heb. 9:14
2. Omnipresent: Psa. 139:7
3. Omniscient: 1 Cor. 2:10-11

C. Involved in all the works of God

1. Creation: Gen. 1:2; Psa. 104:30
2. Incarnation: Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35
3. Resurrection: Rom. 1:4; 8:11
4. Salvation: Rom. 8:1-27

D. Is a Person

1. Has a name: Matt. 28:19; note that even though "name" might be used of a non person, here, in conjunction with the Father and the Son, it must be used of a person
2. Is the "Helper"
 - a. Is another Helper: John 14:16, cf. 1 John 2:1; note also that "Helper" (*parakletos*) was used in Greek always or almost always of persons
 - b. Is sent in Jesus' name, to teach: John 14:26
 - c. Will arrive, and then bear witness: John 15:26-27
 - d. Is sent by Christ to convict of sin, will speak not on his own but on behalf of Christ, will glorify Christ, thus exhibiting humility: John 16:7-14
3. Is the Holy Spirit, in contrast to unholy spirits: Mark 3:22-23, cf. Matt. 12:32; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 3:24-4:6
4. Speaks, is quoted as speaking: John 16:13; Acts 1:16; 8:29; 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 16:6; 20:23; 21:11; 28:25-27; 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:7-11; 10:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:11; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13,22
5. Can be lied to: Acts 5:3
6. Can make decisions, judgments: Acts 15:28
7. Intercedes for Christians with the Father: Rom. 8:26
8. "Impersonal" language used of the Spirit paralleled by language used of other persons
 - a. The Holy Spirit as fire: Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; cf. Ex. 3:2-4; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29
 - b. The Holy Spirit poured out: Acts 2:17, 33; cf. Isa. 53:12; Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6
 - c. Being filled with the Holy Spirit: Eph. 5:18, etc.; cf. Eph. 3:17, 19; 14:10

VIII - The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit Are Distinct Persons

A. Matt. 28:19

1. "the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit": use of definite article before each personal noun indicates distinct persons unless explicitly stated otherwise; compare Rev. 1:17; 2:8, 26
2. The views that "Father" and "Son" are distinct persons but not the Holy Spirit, or that the Holy Spirit is not a person at all, or that all three are different offices or roles of one person, are impossible in view of the grammar (together with the fact that in Scripture a "spirit" is a person unless context shows otherwise).

3. Does singular "name" prove that the three are one person? No; cf. Gen. 5:2; 11:14; 48:6; and esp. 48:16
4. "Name" need not be personal name, may be title: Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:23. If a single personal name is sought, the name shared by all three persons is "Yahweh" or "Jehovah."

B. Acts 2:38 and Matt. 28:19

1. Neither passage specifies that certain words are to be spoken during baptism; nor does the Bible ever record someone saying, "I baptize you in the name of...."
2. Those said to be baptized in the name of Jesus (whether or not the formula "in the name of Jesus" was used) were people already familiar with the God of the OT:
 - a. Jews: Acts 2:5, 38; 22:16
 - b. Samaritans: Acts 8:5, 12, 16
 - c. God fearing Gentiles: Acts 10:1-2, 22, 48
 - d. Disciples of John the Baptist: Acts 19:1-5
 - e. The first Christians in Corinth were Jews and God fearing Gentiles: Acts 18:1-8; 1 Cor. 1:13
3. Trinitarian formula for baptism (if that is what Matt. 28:19 is) was given in context of commissioning apostles to take the gospel to "all the nations," including people who did not know of the biblical God

C. God the Father and the Son Jesus Christ are two persons

1. The salutations: Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23; Phil. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1, 2; 1 Tim. 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm. 3; James 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:2; 2 John 3
2. Two witnesses: John 5:31-32; 8:16-18; cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15
3. The Father sent the Son: John 3:16-17; Gal. 4:4; 1 John 4:10; etc.; cf. John 1:6; 17:18; 20:21
4. The Father and the Son love each other: John 3:35; 5:20; 14:31; 15:9; 17:23-26; cf. Matt. 3:17 par.; 17:5 par.; 2 Pet. 1:17
5. The Father speaks to the Son, and the Son speaks to the Father: John 11:41-42; 12:28; 17:1-26; etc.
6. The Father knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father: Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22; John 7:29; 8:55; 10:15
7. Jesus our Advocate with the Father: 1 John 2:1

D. Jesus is not God the Father

1. Isa. 9:6: "Father of eternity" means eternal; compare other names formed with word "father": *Abialbon*, "father of strength" = strong (2 Sam.

23:31); *Abiasaph*, "father of gathering" = gatherer (Ex. 6:24); Abigail, a woman's name(!), "father of exultation" = exulting (1 Chron. 2:16)

2. John 10:30
 - a. Jesus did not say, "I am the Father," nor did He say, "the Son and the Father are one person."
 - b. The first person plural *esmen* ("we are") implies two persons
 - c. The neuter word for "one" (*hen*) is used, implying essential unity but not personal unity (compare John 17:21-23).
3. John 5:43: Jesus' coming in His Father's name means not that He was the Father because He had the Father's name, but that, while others come in their own name (or their own authority), Jesus does not; He comes in His Father's name (on His Father's authority)
4. John 8:19; 16:3: Ignorance of Jesus is indeed ignorance of the Father, but that does not prove that Jesus is the one He calls "My Father"
5. John 14:6-11
 - a. Jesus and the Father are one being, not one person
 - b. Jesus said, "I am in the Father," not "I am the Father"
 - c. The statement, "the Father is in Me," does not mean Jesus is the Father; compare John 14:20; 17:21-23
6. John 14:18: An older adult brother can care for his younger siblings, thus preventing them from being "orphans," without being their father
7. Colossians 2:9: Does not mean that Jesus is the Father, or that Jesus is an incarnation of the Father; rather, since 'Godhead' (*theotes*) means Deity, the state of being God, the nature of God, Jesus is fully God, but not the only person who is God. "The Godhead" here does not = the Father (note that Jesus is in the Father, John 10:38; 14:10, 11; 17:21), but the nature of the Father.
8. The Father and the Son are both involved in various activities: raising Jesus (Gal. 1:1; John 2:19-22), raising the dead (John 5:21); 6:39-40, 44, 54, 1 Cor. 6:14), answering prayer (John 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23), sending the Holy Spirit (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7), drawing people to Jesus (John 6:44; 12:32), etc. These common works do prove that the two persons are both God, but not that Jesus is the Father

E. The Son existed before His Incarnation, even before creation

1. Prov. 30:4: This is not predictive prophecy; "prophecy" in 30:1 translates *massa*, which is rendered elsewhere as "burden."
2. The Son created all things: See VI.E.1
3. Jesus was "with" (*pros* or *para*) God the Father before creation: John 1:1; 17:5; *pros* in John 1:1 does not mean "pertaining to," although it does in Hebrews 2:17; 5:1 (which use *pros* with *ta*).
4. Jesus, the Son of God, existed before John the Baptist (who was born before Jesus): John 1:15, cf. 1:14-18, 29-34
5. Jesus, the Son, came down from heaven, sent from the Father, and went back to heaven, back to the Father: John 3:13, 31; 6:33; 38, 41, 46,

51, 56-58, 62; 8:23, 42; 13:3; 16:27-28; cf. Acts 1:10-11; cf. the sending of the Holy Spirit, John 16:5-7; 1 Pet. 1:12

6. Jesus, speaking as the Son (John 8:54-56), asserts His eternal preexistence before Abraham: John 8:58
7. The Son explicitly said to exist "before all things": Col. 1:17, cf. 1:12-20
8. These statements cannot be dismissed as true only in God's foreknowledge:
 - a. We are all in God's mind before creation; yet such passages as John 1:1 and John 17:5 clearly mean to say something unusual about Christ.
 - b. To say that all things were created through Christ means that He must have existed at creation.
 - c. No one else in Scripture is ever said to have been with God before creation.

9. Texts which speak of the Son being begotten "today" do not mean He became the Son on a certain day, since they refer to His exaltation at the resurrection (Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:3-5; 5:5; cf. Ps. 2:7; cf. also Rom. 1:4).

F. Jesus is not the Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is "another Comforter": John 14:16; compare 1 John 2:1.
2. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit: John 15:26; 16:7.
3. The Holy Spirit exhibits humility in relation to, and seeks to glorify, Jesus (John 16:13-14).
4. The Son and the Holy Spirit are distinguished as two persons in Matt. 28:19.
5. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus: Luke 3:22.
6. Is Jesus the Holy Spirit?
 - a. 2 Cor. 3:17: the Spirit is here called "Lord" in the sense of being Yahweh or God, not Jesus (cf. v. 16, citing Ex. 34:34; cf. v. 17 in the New English Bible); note Acts 28:25-27, cf. Isa. 6:8-10.
 - b. 1 Cor. 15:45: Jesus is "a life-giving Spirit," not in the sense that He is the Holy Spirit whom He sent at Pentecost, but in the sense that He is the glorified God-man; and as God He is Spirit by nature. All three persons of the Trinity are Spirit, though there are not three divine Spirits; and only one person is designated "the Holy Spirit."
 - c. Rom. 8:27, 34: the fact that two persons intercede for us is consistent with the fact that we have two Advocates (John 14:16; Rom. 8:26; 1 John 2:1).
 - d. John 14:18: Jesus here refers to His appearances to the disciples after the resurrection (compare 14:19), not to the coming of the Spirit.

- e. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are both involved in various activities: raising Jesus (John 2:19- 19-22); Rom. 8:9-11), raising the dead (John 5:21; 6:39-40, 44, 54, Rom. 8:9-11), dwelling in the believer (John 14:16; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 1:27), interceding for the believer (Rom. 8:26; Heb. 7:25), sanctifying believers (Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 1:2), etc. These works prove that the two persons are both God, but not that Jesus is the Holy Spirit.

G. The Father is not the Holy Spirit

- 1. The Father sent the Holy Spirit: John 14:15; 15:26
- 2. The Holy Spirit intercedes with the Father for us: Rom. 8:26-27
- 3. The Father and the Holy Spirit are distinguished as two persons in Matt. 28:19.

4. Is the Father the Holy Spirit?

- a. Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35: It is argued that the Holy Spirit is the Father of the incarnate Son of God; this argument ignores the fact that the "conception" is not a product of physical union between a man and a woman!
- b. The Father and the Holy Spirit are both said to be active in various activities; the resurrection of Jesus (Gal. 1:1; Rom. 8:11), comforting Christians (2 Cor. 1:3-4; John 14:26), sanctifying Christians (Jude 1; 1 Pet. 1:2), etc. The most these facts prove is that the two work together; they do not prove the two are one person.

IX - Conclusion: The Bible teaches the Trinity

A. All the elements of the doctrine are taught in Scripture

- 1. One God.
- 2. The Father is God.
- 3. The Son is God.
- 4. The Holy Spirit is God.
- 5. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three Persons (i.e., they are not each other, nor are they impersonal; they relate to one another personally).

B. The New Testament presents a consistent triad of Father, Son, Holy Spirit (God, Christ, Spirit): Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:34; also Luke 1:35; 3:21-22 par.; 4:1-12; John 4:10-25; 7:37-39; 14:16; 20:21-22; Acts 1:4-8; 2:33, 38-39; 5:3-4, 9, 30-32; 7:55-56; 10:36- 38, 44-48; 11:15-18; 15:8-11; 20:38; 28:25-31; Rom. 1:1-4; 5:5-10; 8:2-4, 9-11, 14-17; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:4-6, 11-12, 18; 2 Cor. 1:19-22; 3:6-8, 14-18; Gal. 3:8-14; 4:4-7; Eph. 1:3-17; 2:18, 21-22; 3:14-19; 4:4-6, 29-32; 5:18-

20; Phil. 3:3; 1 Thess. 1:3-6; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Tit. 3:4-6; Heb. 2:3-4; 9:14; 10:28-31; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 John 3:21-24; 4:13-14; Jude 20-21; Rev. 2:18, 27-29

C. Therefore, the Bible does teach the Trinity

X - What Difference Does The Doctrine Of The Trinity Make?

A. Sovereignty: Because the three Persons have each other, we can be assured that God created us only to share the love they have and not as a means to His own end: Acts 17:25; John 17:21-26.

B. Mystery: The triune God is totally unlike anything in our world, and therefore greater than anything we can comprehend: Rom. 11:33-36; Isa. 40:18.

C. Salvation: God alone planned our salvation, came to save us, and dwells in us to complete our salvation: 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:3-18; etc.

D. Prayer: We pray to the Father through the Son, and also pray to the Son directly, in the Spirit: John 14:13-14; Eph. 2:18; etc.

E. Worship: We worship Father and Son in the Spirit: John 4:23-24; Phil. 3:3; Heb. 1:8; etc.

F. Love: The love among the three persons is the basis and model for our love for one another: John 17:26.

G. Unity: The unity of the three persons is the basis and model for the unity of the church: John 17:21-23.

H. Humility: As the persons of the Trinity seek the glory of each other, so we should seek the interests of others above our own: Phil. 2:5-11; John 16:13-14.

I. Sonship: We are "sons of God" as we are united with the Son of God by the work of the Holy Spirit and the adoption of the Father: John 1:12-23; Rom. 8:14-17.

J. Truth: All those who wish to worship and love God must seek to know Him as He is in truth, for God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is truth: John 4:24; 14:6, 17; 15:26; 16:13.

2. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST: Jesus is 100% God and 100% man for all eternity.

The dual nature of Jesus Christ is a core doctrine. All other religions, cults and wolves get this doctrine wrong.

Third Wave teachers are now saying that Jesus was just an anointed man, therefore if we believe in Him we too are anointed as He was, thus we can do

anything He did including signs and miracles. Both Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland have said that any "anointed" Christian could also have died for the sins of the world just as Jesus did and that they could have done it. This is a complete misunderstanding and corruption of both the dual nature of Jesus and of the term "anointing". The word "anointed" is being misused all over the place today. We must never forget that Jesus Christ is the "Anointed One". We are His children by virtue of His anointing as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are under His "anointing" by virtue of the Holy Spirit that indwells us and empowers us to Christian service and sanctification. He has those titles today because He laid down His life for us in obedience and submission to the will of the Father. We must also live in obedience to the will of Jesus Christ, the law of Christ.

A closer look at the two natures of Christ.

Jesus is God in human flesh. He is not half God and half man. He is fully God and fully man. At the incarnation He added to His divine nature the nature of man. Thus He has two natures: divine and human. He is both God and man at the same time. He is not merely a man who "had God within Him" nor is he a man who "manifested the God principle." He is God, second person of the Trinity. "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word" (Heb.1:3, NIV). Jesus' two natures are not "mixed together," nor are they combined into a new God-man nature. They are separate yet act as a unit. This is called the Hypostatic Union.

This is another mystery we have to accept by faith, but we need to understand its significance or we can end up believing a false gospel.

The following chart should help you see the two natures of Jesus "in action":

THE GOD JESUS

He is worshipped (Matt. 2:2,11; 14:33; 28:9)
He is prayed to (Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 1:1-2)
He was called God (John 20:28; Heb. 1:8)
He was called Son of God (Mark 1:1)
He is sinless (1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 4:15)
He knew all things (John 21:17)
He gives eternal life (John 10:28)
The fullness of Deity dwells in Him (Col. 2:9)

THE MAN JESUS

He worshipped the Father (John 17)
He prayed to the Father (John 17:1)
He was called man (Mark 15:39; John 19:5)
He was called Son of Man (John 9:35-37)
He was tempted (Matt. 4:1)
He grew in wisdom (Luke 2:52)
He died (Rom. 5:8)
He has a body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:39)

3. THE SECOND COMING: Jesus Christ is coming bodily to earth to rule and judge.

Christ is Returning!

The second coming of Christ is a cornerstone of Biblical doctrine. It is not possible to be considered orthodox and evangelical unless you believe Jesus is coming back bodily to rule and reign. Our Lord promised it, the apostles confirmed it, and the entire book of Revelation celebrates it. Below are just a few examples of the verses that establish this fact.

*John 14:1-3 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I will come back** and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*
Matthew 26:64 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

*Luke 21:27 At that time they will see the **Son of Man** coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

The return of Christ will be visible. He will not come in secret; He will not come "mystically," or only to those with eyes to see Him. All humanity will witness His coming, and those who do not belong to Him will be terrified.

*Acts 1:11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, **will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.**"*
*Matthew 24:29-30 "Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' "At that time **the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky**, and all the nations of the earth will mourn.*
*Re 1:7 Look, he is coming with the clouds, and **every eye will see him**, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

The Second Coming of Christ will be Bodily. He will not come "spiritually," He will not return "in His Body" the Church. He has a body now, a glorious body, witnessed by the apostle John (Rev 1:12-16), and when He comes in clouds of glory, it will be in that glorious body.

*Philippians 3:21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like **his glorious body.***

*Zechariah 14:3 Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day **his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives**, east of Jerusalem, and the **Mount of Olives will be split in two from***

east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

He will come in Power and Glory--unlike His first coming, His true nature will not be concealed. He will come at the head of a heavenly army, as the conquering Sovereign that He is.

*Titus 2:13 while we wait for the blessed hope-- **the glorious appearing** of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.*

*Matthew 24:30 They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, **with power and great glory.***

4. SALVATION: It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

All the false religions of the world deny this. Cults deny it in many ways but primarily because they add works to salvation, as the Catholics do. The Third Wave denies this doctrine on a number of counts. They very rarely preach the full gospel message but rather a message of "Repent and come to Jesus". That is not the full gospel message. Where there is no mention of the cross and redemption through the grace of God alone in Christ alone, that is where there is a false gospel being preached. They also deny the full indwelling of the Holy Spirit at salvation by their doctrine of a transferable impartation "anointing" second baptism of the Spirit, thus denying the biblical definition of salvation. The need for the Holy Spirit to be "imparted" or "transferred" by human hands denies the gospel of grace alone. This doctrine is one of the most important core doctrines of Christianity and one that is being attacked most often. Benny Hinn and others like him are redefining the very core of Christianity which is salvation by grace ALONE through faith ALONE in Christ ALONE.

Eph. 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (KJV)

GRACE ALONE!

*Titus 3:5-7 **Not by works** of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being **justified by his grace**, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (KJV)*

*Rom. 11:6 And if by grace, then it **is no more of works**: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (KJV)*

FAITH ALONE!

*Rom. 3:28 Therefore we conclude that a **man is justified by faith** without the deeds of the law. (KJV)*

*Rom. 4:4-5 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, **but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.** (KJV)*

CHRIST ALONE!

*Jn. 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the **way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.** (KJV)*

*Acts 14:12 **Neither is there salvation in any other:** for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (KJV)*

Jesus Christ did all the work to save us from our sins. This is summed up nicely in what is called the "Romans Road"

*ROMANS 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (KJV)
ROMANS 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (KJV)
ROMANS 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (KJV)*

ROMANS 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (KJV)

ROMANS 8:1a There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, (KJV)

ROMANS 10:9 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. (KJV)

ROMANS 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (KJV)

5. THE SCRIPTURE: It is entirely inerrant and sufficient for all Christian life.

This doctrine is so important today because the ideas of existentialism and subjectivism have influenced many Christians. If everything is relative and what I believe may not be necessary for you to believe, and I should be tolerant of what you believe in even if it is not, then there is no such thing as solid objective Truth. However, true Christians hold the Scriptures as their highest authority in all matters of faith and practice. The Bible is a finished canon of revelation from God. It was even quoted by Jesus and the Apostles, most notably when Jesus was tempted by Satan. Jesus didn't have to use the Word, but He did to show us that it truly is the Word of God the Father. The Apostles confirmed this as well.

2 Peter 1:19-21 And in the written word of prophecy we have something more permanent; to which you do well to pay attention - as to a lamp shining in a dimly-lighted place - until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. But, above all, remember that no prophecy in Scripture will be found to have come

from the prophet's own prompting; for never did any prophecy come by human will, but men sent by God spoke as they were impelled by the Holy Spirit. (Wey)

2 Tim. 3:16-17 Every Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for convincing, for correction of error, and for instruction in right doing; so that the man of God may himself be complete and may be perfectly equipped for every good work. (Wey)

1Co 4:6 Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.(KJV)

Rev. 22:18-19 For I testify together to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this Book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add on him the plagues that have been written in this Book. And if anyone takes away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God will take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which have been written in this Book. (NKJV)

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

1. Inspiration- "to breathe in"

a. General

- 1) "To affect with an emotion or thought and thus influence or stimulate to action".
- 2) Can be positive or negative, i.e.; 'inspired poem', 'inspired with fear'.

b. Special

- 1) Process by which God caused His Special Revelation to be communicated to man

Scripture:

Jer 1:9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

2 Tim 3:16,17 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

1 Cor 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

2 Pet 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2. Incorrect Views on Special Inspiration

a. Thematic inspiration- they think only the idea is inspired. but we know..."No private interpretation"

b. Partial inspiration - they think only certain parts are inspired.(and they determine WHICH parts!) but we know..."All scripture is inspired..."

c. Incomplete inspiration - they think of ongoing Revelation but we know..."Perfect, thoroughly furnished"

d. Mechanical inspiration - they think God possessed the writers or something but we know..."spoke as they were moved"

3. Verbal- having to do with words

a. Definition - each word of the original text is inspired

b. Scripture -- (Jesus said "not one jot or tittle will pass from the law...")

1) Each word

Prov 30:5,6 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

2) Each tense

Matt 22:31,32 But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

3) Each singular or plural

Gal 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, Which is Christ.

4) Each gender

2 Tim 2:2 And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also.

1 Tim 2:12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

5) Each number

Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

4. Plenary - the whole of Scripture is inspired both in substance and in structure

a. Scripture

Ex 34:27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

1 Chr 28:19 "All this," David said, "I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me, and he gave me understanding in all the details of the plan."

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things which you have been taught.

2 Tim 3:16 - All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

5. Proofs

a. Internal (1 Thess 2:13)

- 1) declarations of Inspiration
- 2) manifestations of Inspiration
- a) Unity of theme-extent of scope-diversity of human authorship-first mentions- LIGHT, FAITH, HOPE, LOVE, BLOOD, GRACE, WORD, JUST, PERFECT, ATONEMENT, COVENANT, ALTAR, SHED, WINE, DRUNKEN, PRAISE, PEACE, TITHES, VISION, SHIELD, REWARD, I AM, IMPUTED, RIGHTEOUSNESS, WORSHIP, MERCY, FIRE, OBEY, SOW, SALVATION, ANGEL OF THE LORD (Any of these words can be found in Genesis and followed all through Scripture to their fruition in Revelation; These make for great topical studies.)
- b) Prophecy fulfilled - we see most O.T. prophecies fulfilled, including 300+ about Christ. The only ones left are at the very end...
 - 3) Purity of doctrine & ethics - doesn't become watered down
 - 4) History of mankind - (the good, the bad, the ugly) Man wouldn't make himself look bad
 - 5) Christ - who could invent this stuff? No one could ever dream up this....
 - 6) Person of Christ & the Doctrine of Salvation is the greatest internal proof of Holy Inspiration.

b. External

- 1) the Church
- 2) the Believer
- 3) the Bible

6. Methods of special inspiration (Scripture)

- a. Divine guidance in selection of facts and narration of observed scenes
- b. Enlightenment in moral & doctrinal subjects
- c. Direct special revelation concerning unknown or unknowables (prophecies)

d. Direct dictation ("Write this down")

e. Direct inscription (God writes it Himself)

7. The Word is inspired, not the men - these were not supermen, or somehow on a higher spiritual plane; they were fishermen, shepherds, farmers, kings, tentmakers, etc.

Definitions:

General revelation- these are for everyone

Special revelation- only for some

Special inspiration- process by which God caused His special revelation to be communicated to man

Illumination- process by which God (the Holy Spirit) makes His special revelation (Scripture) known to the human heart

Authority of the Bible - Infallible, Inerrant, & Immutable

1. Infallible- cannot fail
2. Inerrant- without error - ALL of God's Word is trustworthy
3. Immutable- cannot be changed and cannot change
4. Inspiration & Authority

a. Authority- the power and prerogative belong to God - flow to us from His Word (make sure to get the order correct; we don't want to impose our interpretations of the Bible on God and try to fit Him into our box...)

b. Authority for faith

- 1) Faith as belief - trust put in the Infallible, Inerrant, Immutable Word of God
- 2) Faith as doctrine - taught by the Infallible, Inerrant, Immutable Word of God
- 3) Faith as religion - built upon the Infallible, Inerrant, Immutable Word of God

c. Authority for practice – “Be not mere hearers of the Word, but doers...”

The Holy Bible, consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testament is the Word of God. Its original manuscripts were verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is infallible and without errors, complete in its revelation, and our absolute authority. Nothing needs to be added to the Bible. Anything that goes against its teachings is not from God. If we want to clarify a doctrinal question, the Bible is our final authority. If we say that the Bible is complete, that doesn't mean that God doesn't speak to us when we pray. He does so to help us understand His will for a specific situation, but that will always be in accordance to His written Word and never be a general revelation that needs to be added to the Bible. So, listen to what God says to you in prayer, but be aware that Satan tries to influence your mind as well – so you better check if what you heard is consistent with the Bible.

The best way to detect a counterfeit is to know the original very well. It has been said that this is the way cashiers in banks are trained to recognize fake money. They just deal so much with “the real thing” that they immediately know when they have a counterfeit bill in their hands. It is the same when we deal with cults. We have to know the Word of God very well to avoid falling into the traps of a cult. That is, we shouldn't just know the terminology of the Bible, we shouldn't just be able to cite Bible verses – we must have a clear understanding of what they mean. Yes, it is extremely important that you know your Bible well – but that is what many cults do as well. In fact the Mormons and Jehova's Witnesses can probably cite more verses than most true Christians. But that is not the point – they mean something entirely different when they use the same words as you. So you must be able to express in your own words what certain passages mean and how they relate to the rest of the Word. Otherwise you can get easily confused.

Of course, even among Christians there may be minor differences where we may argue whether the Bible teaches that or not. Issues such as denying the command of baptism, a different attitude towards alcohol etc. do not characterize a cult and we shouldn't view those who share our basic doctrines but have different opinions on “just these aspects” as anti-Christian but as brothers and sisters in Christ which may have to be convinced by Scripture – and have the right to try to convince us that we see some things wrong. Disputing with them will give both of us more faith – and it is not important that we “win” here. But it is different when central doctrines are concerned that mark the basis of our faith.

Here we should not waver and this means we better know precisely what the Word of God says. In fact, that is the best way to avoid traps. You don't have to learn much about a cult – you need to know the truth and this not just on the surface. So, when we study cults, we want to have three things in mind:

1. *Protection:* We want to be able to see the subtle twists of the word of God, so that we are not fooled by a cult or fall into the traps of its teachings.

2. *Understanding:* By analyzing a deviation from the doctrines of “orthodox Christianity” we will get a better understanding of what the word of God really says. We all interpret what we read and hear – we cannot avoid this, because we all have a different understanding of how the words of our language are used and we assign meaning to them in our own way. Besides, the Bible was written in a language of a different culture, 2000 years and more ago. When we read an English translation, we cannot expect that the words chosen in that translation are able to catch the intended meaning 100%. Besides, we use translations that are between 20 and 350 years old. Do we expect that we understand the English language in the same way as the translators did it then?

By looking at the Word of God from various perspectives we make sure that our interpretation is close to what God wanted to express. Studying misunderstandings, fine twists, and deviations is a good way of getting the right picture.

3. *Witnessing:* By knowing what a specific cult teaches, it is easier for us to reach out to a cultist once we got in contact with them.

Any person who seeks God outside His Word is on a wrong path. But sometimes cultists dress up their practices as if they were based on the Word: we see this in the Roman Catholic Church and perhaps more blatantly in the extreme charismatic and emerging churches. Although Christian (so-called) cultists dress up their religion as if it were biblical, satanic influence can be seen in the way they actually suppress the Word of God. Satan wants to keep people away from the Bible, because they might find the truth there. Thus, for centuries (1300's – 1500's) the Roman Catholic Church hunted, tortured and burned people who translated the Bible, and also those who read it. Burning is not permitted now (thank God for the separation of Church and state). Therefore, instead, the Word is ignored and twisted by those in the pulpit and in the pews, and increasingly deformed in new Bible translations, all in the nominal service of God but the actual service of Satan.

In many Churches, people will correct you or exclude you if you show too much concern for the truth and teachings of Scripture. It is true that there are some who use doctrine coldly—they have all the right words but know not the grace of God. But that is the fault of man, not the Word. We are given birth and life through the Word and not apart from it.

Let no one deceive you about the primacy of the Word of God.

Examples of Minor Doctrines (Negotiables):

1. Predestination, election,
2. Communion every week, monthly, or quarterly, etc.
3. Saturday or Sunday Worship
4. Pre, mid, post trib rapture
5. Continuation or cessation of the charismatic gifts
6. Baptism by immersion or sprinkling
7. Musical Instruments in church
8. Wearing of pants by women, long hair by men
9. Communion using bread and real wine, flakes and juice
10. Formal hymns, contemporary music for worship

MARKS OF A CULT

Concerted efforts at influence and control lie at the core of cultic groups, programs, and relationships. Many members, former members, and supporters of cults are not fully aware of the extent to which members may have been manipulated, exploited, even abused. The following list of social-structural, social-psychological, and interpersonal behavioral patterns commonly found in cultic environments may be helpful in assessing a particular group or relationship.

Compare these patterns to the situation you were in (or in which you, a family member, or friend is currently involved). This list may help you determine if there is cause for concern. Bear in mind that this list is not meant to be a “cult scale” or a definitive checklist to determine if a specific group is a cult. This is not so much a diagnostic instrument as it is an analytical tool.

- The group displays excessively zealous and unquestioning commitment to its leader and (whether he is alive or dead) regards his belief system, ideology, and practices as the Truth, as law.
- Questioning, doubt, and dissent are discouraged or even punished.
- Mind-altering practices (such as meditation, chanting, speaking in tongues, denunciation sessions, and debilitating work routines) are used in excess and serve to suppress doubts about the group and its leader(s).
- The leadership dictates, sometimes in great detail, how members should think, act, and feel (for example, members must get permission to date, change jobs, marry—or leaders prescribe what types of clothes to wear, where to live, whether or not to have children, how to discipline children, and so forth).

- The group is elitist, claiming a special, exalted status for itself, its leader(s) and members (for example, the leader is considered the Messiah, a special being, an avatar—or the group and/or the leader is on a special mission to save humanity).
- The group has a polarized us-versus-them mentality, which may cause conflict with the wider society.
- The leader is not accountable to any authorities (unlike, for example, teachers, military commanders or ministers, priests, monks, and rabbis of mainstream religious denominations).
- The group teaches or implies that its supposedly exalted ends justify whatever means it deems necessary. This may result in members' participating in behaviors or activities they would have considered reprehensible or unethical before joining the group (for example, lying to family or friends, or collecting money for bogus charities).
- The leadership induces feelings of shame and/or guilt in order to influence and/or control members. Often, this is done through peer pressure and subtle forms of persuasion.
- Subservience to the leader or group requires members to cut ties with family and friends, and radically alter the personal goals and activities they had before joining the group.
- The group is preoccupied with bringing in new members.
- The group is preoccupied with making money.
- Members are expected to devote inordinate amounts of time to the group and group-related activities.
- Members are encouraged or required to live and/or socialize only with other group members.
- The most loyal members (the "true believers") feel there can be no life outside the context of the group. They believe there is no other way to be, and often fear reprisals to themselves or others if they leave (or even consider leaving) the group.

CULTIC GROUPS/TEACHINGS

8. Mormonism

The *Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints*, whose members have been nicknamed *Mormons* claims to be the restoration of the true church established by Jesus Christ. It has no relation with the Catholic or Protestant Churches but differs from them in theology, organization, and religious practices. In its numerous publication it emphasizes that the Christian Church established by Jesus Christ has become corrupt over the century and needed to be re-established again. Because of this, there is no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints.

These are strong claims, but they carry some truth. The Christian Churches have always been in danger of being corrupted. Some, like the Catholic Church, have fallen pretty badly during the middle age and were never restored. The reformation in the 1500's started new churches which were theologically correct again, but today they suffer from a serious lack of commitment. Even many evangelical churches do not preach the whole Word of God anymore.

But is the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in fact a restoration of the true church of Jesus Christ? Let's have a look at what they believe.

- *We believe the Bible to be the word of God*
- *We believe in God the Eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost*
- *We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Jehova, the promised Messiah, Redeemer and Savior, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*
- *We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved*

These are original citations from the Articles of Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. That sounds pretty much like what we believe. So – why do we say that Mormonism is a cult? Where are the differences?

The differences show up when you dive deeper into Mormon theology and find out that the above articles of faith have a different meaning for them than for us. The bible is not the only source of authority they accept, their interpretation of the word "God" is quite different from ours and the same holds for the words "redemption" and "salvation". To understand what the Mormons believe we need to know a little bit about the early history of Mormonism.

History

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints was founded by its first prophet Joseph Smith in 1830 in Fayette, New York. According to his own

reports he had his first heavenly vision in 1820 which were followed by numerous visitations by a "resurrected person" named Moroni. In 1827 Moroni delivered to Smith the "golden plates", whose translation is now the *Book of Mormon*. In May 1829 John the Baptist appeared and ordained Smith to the Aaronic Priesthood. Shortly after that Peter, James, and John came to ordain him to the Melchizedek Priesthood. This established the authority of the church, because without the Melchizedek Priesthood there could be not salvation for men on earth.

It is difficult to understand how Smith found his first followers, but the Finger Lakes Region has always been an easy prey for new religions and probably still is. Mormonism wasn't the only cult that started here. But because of its great emphasis on missions, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints has now grown into a church that has more than 3 million members in the United States, most of them in the state of Utah, and sends out as many as 14,000 missionaries. A few organizations separated from the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints when Brigham Young took the Mormons to Utah, but compared to main church they are rather insignificant.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

Many bad things have been said about the Mormons, most of them being not true. In fact, as far as commitment and moral standards are concerned, the accomplishments of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints are astonishing and probably far beyond what Baptist Churches have achieved with their own members. In that respect, we can only learn from them.

But what about their beliefs? The claims of Joseph Smith about his visions may seem a little strange – but that alone doesn't mean that Mormonism is a cult. So, is the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints really a Church of Jesus Christ or not? Let's look at our measuring rod – the mainline Christian articles of faith – and compare.

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

A more complete citation from the Mormon's articles of faith reads:

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 that he will reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God

So while the Mormons believe that the Bible is the word of God, it is only one of the many possible sources of authority. They strongly emphasize that the Bible is not complete and that there will always be additions to the current canon. It is taught, for instance, that Jesus repealed the law of Moses in the sermon on the

mount (**Matthew 5:21-48**) although he explicitly says in **Matthew 5:17** that he will not change it.

The Mormons rely on the King James Version of the Bible, but the restriction “as far as it is translated correctly” suggests errors in the translation which make corrections by subsequent revelations and prophecies necessary.

The book of Mormon is considered to be an equally inspired record of the ancient people who inhabited the American continent before and after the time of Christ. The book tells the epic story of two waves of immigration, the first after the destruction of the tower of Babel with no survivors after a deadly battle 1500 years later, and the second about 600 B.C. under Levi from the tribe of Manasseh. Two nations, the Nephite and the Lamanite, came out of this. The Nephites were well advanced in civilization and became Christians after the resurrected Christ came to the Americas to organize his church. The Lamanites fell under the curse, became dark in skin, and degenerated. In a final struggle 1000 years later the Nephites were eliminated. Their last survivor, Moroni, completed the book of Mormon on Golden Plates and hid them until he reappeared to give them to Joseph Smith. The surviving “degenerated nation” is identified with the American Indians.

In contrast to the Bible, which is confirmed by thousands of historical evidences, the book of Mormon must be viewed as purely fictional. There is no external evidence for any of its claims. It also overemphasizes the role of America as “blessed land of God” and attempts to give it a “godly justification” for the prevalent racism of the 1800’s.

So altogether the Mormons know three sources of authority – the Bible, as long as it fits (“is translated correctly”) – the Book of Mormon – and revelations to their prophets. The role of the Bible is inferior for them and it is by no means the final authority anymore. Apart from using a similar terminology the Mormons have little in common with true Christianity.

God

We believe in God the Eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost

At a first glance Mormons seem to have the same concept of God as we have. But Mormon theology clearly teaches that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three separate Gods “composing the great presiding council of the universe”. They deny the doctrine of the trinity, because they view the blending of personalities as unnatural and impossible.

If something cannot be explained in human terms, it cannot be true. This argument, which seems to dominate the Mormon theology, leads to a belief

system that appears to have a very limited view of God and consequently relies on complicated and often somewhat strange concepts.

Mormons believe in an *eternal progression*. God has once been as we are and is just much further ahead of us. In fact, every man can eventually become a God if he is faithful enough. Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have already entered the state of exaltation and become Gods.

Mormon theology denies the possibility of immaterial bodies and thus believe that God must have a body of flesh and bones – a direct contradiction to **John 4:24** or **1. Timothy 1:17** and even their own teaching about the Holy Spirit.

Because of God being a material, Mormons have to re-interpret the meaning of *omnipresence*, *omniscience*, and *omnipotence* – doctrines that they seem to share with orthodox Christianity. For them, God can only have a limited extension in space, but his senses and powers are infinite. So he can transfer himself to any place and is thus omnipresence. He is *omniscient*, and *omnipotent* only because of the support of angels and ministering servants.

It is also taught that the Gods have wives in heaven and through them, God is literally our father. We see a progression of Gods evolving from the human spirits who have once been fathered by some other Gods and now themselves create new human spirits. Mormonism calls this doctrine “celestial parentage”.

So, a closer look reveals that the concept of God taught by Mormonism is quite different from the God of the Bible.

Man

The Mormon doctrine of man is very different from that of orthodox Christianity and is the key to an understanding of all the other doctrines. According to Mormonism, all life begins at the time of *spirit creation*. However, for a Mormon creation does not mean that God brought man into being, but only that he organized the elements which are co-eternal with him and thus turned them into *spirit children*.

Man's advance in the scheme of *Eternal Progression* involves at least four stages: (1) a premortal or *spirit existence*, (2) *mortal life* on earth with spirit and body temporarily joined, (3) the *spirit world* for the disembodied spirits after death, and (4) *immortality* after the resurrection with spirit and body inseparably connected.

Already in the premortal stage the spirit children have the freedom to choose good or evil. Their choices determine to a degree their later stage. Satan and one third rebelled at this stage and were excluded from eternal progression but became *sons of perdition* (we'll come back to that when we discuss the things to

come). The rest stood with Christ, but some were less “valiant” and therefore had to live an inferior life as humans. This is the explanation for the “*millions of insane and afflicted people on earth and those living in filth, poverty, and degradation*”. For the Mormons until 1978, black skin was one of the signs of this degradation and for this reason Black People were denied any spiritual rank.

This is a pretty unbiblical view of humans. The bible nowhere teaches that sickness and poverty are the result of one individual’s sin, nor does it tell us that people with a different skin color are to be viewed as spiritually inferior.

But Mormonism also has quite a different understanding of the fall of mankind. For them, Adam was the archangel Michael in his premortal state. Together with *one of* his preincarnate wives (note the “one of”), Eve, he was placed in the Garden of Eden, which the Mormons of course locate in America (Jackson County, MO). Both had immortal bodies but Eve sinned and became mortal. This created a dilemma for Adam, because he had to follow two conflicting commands: to *multiply and replenish the earth* and *not to eat from the tree*. He deliberately and wisely chose to stand by the first and greater command and took of the fruit. So *he fell that men may be*.

Mormonism thus completely *denies the original sin*. What God has declared sinful is now declared as one of the great advances toward eternal exaltation, because it opened the door for billions of pre-existing spirits to become mortal and further proceed in the scheme of eternal progression. For the Mormon, Adam did not sin at all: only Eve did, while the man – apparently viewed as ethically superior to women – had a good excuse for his transgression.

Consequently we don’t inherit sinfulness from Adam and Eve but are innocent until we reach the *age of accountability*, which Mormons determine to be eight. Again, this is not what the Bible teaches. Although I am not quite sure what will happen to children who die before they can distinguish good and evil, the Bible clearly says that the heart of man is evil from childhood – there is no innocent stage.

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the eternal Jehova, the promised Messiah, Redeemer and Savior, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Although this statement seems to be in keeping with Bible teaching, the Mormon’s beliefs about Jesus Christ differ a lot from that of orthodox Christianity.

Mormons make a distinction between *Elohim*, the exalted name reserved for the father, and *Jehova*, which they see as Jesus Christ. To them Jesus Christ is the first-born of all the *spirit children of God*, a term that includes angels, demons, and human beings. The difference between Christ and them is not one of kind

but only of position. Any thought of Christ's distinctive deity is rejected. In fact, it is said that by obedience and devotion to the truth he *earned the rank as God* while yet in his pre-existing state. He was already God before he became mortal, but this is the only distinction from normal humans who can attain godhood only after their mortal life.

As first-born child of *Elohim*, he was the executive of the Father in the creation, being aided in his work by angels and many humans.

His earthly life began with the virgin birth of Mary, which assures his *unique status*. But Mormons emphasize that *Elohim* is literally the father of both the spirit and the human body of Christ. Mormons agree with orthodox Christianity that Christ was the only person to live a sinless life, that he died on the cross for the redemption of mankind, and arose in the body on the third day. But in addition to his appearances recorded in the Bible the book of Mormon also claims that he came to the Americas as resurrected being and organized his church among the Nephite people.

The Holy Spirit

For the Mormon, the Holy Spirit is an entirely spiritual person without flesh and bones and thus different in nature from the father and the son. He emanates from the deity and is everywhere present, although only in one place at a time.

This again is superficially identical with what the bible says, but contradicts both the Mormon teaching about persons and the biblical teaching that father, son, and spirit are the same in every divine aspect.

Salvation

We believe that through the atonement of Christ all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

Again, Mormonism uses a formulation of an article of faith that is very close to orthodox Christianity. But as before, the Mormon understanding of the atonement is different from ours. For Mormons, there are two aspects of salvation.

1. The first aspect is the *unconditional salvation* for all of mankind. Weakness, disease, and death came upon all men because of the transgression of Adam. Through the atonement of Christ physical resurrection – or immortality – is guaranteed for all living beings. This kind of salvation doesn't require faith in Christ but includes everyone. The only exception are the sons of perdition.

9. The second aspect is *conditional salvation*. It determines the course of eternal progression for the individual soul and depends entirely on obedience, works, and choices made during the mortal life.

While all men become immortal, only the faithful and obedient are allowed to enter the highest sphere of existence in eternity. Faith alone is not sufficient for such an "exaltation". The *celestial kingdom* can only be entered through obedience to the laws and ordinances, devotion, and faithfulness. In other words, individual salvation is by works, not by faith.

Faith in Jesus Christ thus does not play an important role in the Mormon doctrine of salvation. It is not necessary to escape eternal punishment and it does not help to enter the exalted eternal life. The biblical understanding of salvation is quite different from that. You cannot escape eternal punishment if you don't turn to Christ and your right to enter the heavenly kingdom does not depend on works (**Ephesians 2:8-9**). Salvation is based on faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Mormonism also puts a very strong emphasis on baptism. Without baptism, your sins cannot be forgiven and you cannot enter the celestial kingdom. To redeem those who believed but died without being baptized properly, Mormons practice baptisms for the dead and keep meticulous records about the life of millions of people. Again, it must be said that although baptism is an important act of obedience, the Bible nowhere teaches that it is necessary for salvation.

Things to come

The Mormon doctrines about the last things use similar elements as we know from the Bible but differ severely from orthodox Christianity. Some of the main aspects are:

The book of Mormon teaches that Israel will literally gather, which today is interpreted as joining the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, and that Zion will be built in the American continent. Afterwards Christ will return, and those who made it into the celestial kingdom will be resurrected to meet him in the air, to reign together with him. The other believers will be resurrected next and live on earth during the "millennium" reign. The wicked will be destroyed and sent into a "the prison house" for cleansing. Satan will be bound during the 1000 years. The second resurrection will then separate those destined for eternity from the sons of perdition.

There will be three eternal kingdoms of widely differing glories and one place for the sons of perdition.

The sphere of exaltation in the celestial kingdom

is reserved for the faithful and obedient. They will be gods and shall dwell in the presence of God, the father, and His Christ forever.

The terrestrial kingdom

is for the lukewarm believers and those who accepted the gospel only while in the spirit world, that is after death. They remain without exaltation and receive the presence of the Son but not of the father.

The lowest sphere in the celestial world

is reserved for the rest who rejected Christ (or the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints) and lived wickedly. They will never experience the presence of God or of Christ, but shall live eternally as servants of God.

Perdition

is for those who have no hope of any degree of salvation, that is Satan and the angels who rebelled with him, and all men who committed the unpardonable sin. They are doomed to everlasting fire.

However, eternal punishment is not really eternal, because God has the power to pardon them after an appropriate time. So, in the end, nobody will stay in the state of punishment forever.

So we see that the Mormon doctrine of the last things is filled with fantasies that integrate biblical concepts but have little to do with the word of God. The terminology is often the same as in orthodox Christianity but – as we have seen over and over again – Mormonism twists the meaning of this terminology so much, that their doctrines have nothing in common with true Christianity.

Special Aspects

Besides their religious beliefs certain Mormon practices deserve a brief discussion.

Polygamy:

was established as a result of a direct revelation to Joseph Smith, which emphasized the eternity of the marriage covenant and the plurality of wives. Mormons believed that the Gods had multiple wives and felt that they were divinely commanded to do the same. However, all marriages had to be duly established and gave a lot of responsibilities to the man who wanted to lead such a large family. Polygamy became a controversial issue later and the practice was discontinued in 1890 in order to remove obstacles that kept Utah from joining the United States. Polygamy is a severe misuse of the word of God. The fact that God permitted polygamy in ancient times does not mean that he sanctified it. In a time where many men were killed in wars and women could not survive alone except by prostitution this was the lesser evil, but by no means good.

Racism:

The book of Mormon and its interpretation in Mormon doctrines clearly identifies Black and Native Americans as spiritually inferior beings, which is in strong contradiction to the word of God. It appears that the Mormon doctrines tried to give a “godly justification” for the racism and sexism that was so common in the time of Joseph Smith and his followers. The Bible, however, nowhere teaches that certain people are superior to others just because of their race, skin color, sex, or other physical differences.

10. Jehova’s Witnesses

Jehova’s Witnesses define themselves to be *servants of Jehova, the Almighty God, and active witnesses to his sovereign supremacy*. They reject any association with organized Christendom, which they view as religious hypocrisy. For them, the central issue is *vindication of the name and sovereignty of Jehova* – far more important than the salvation of men.

Jehova’s Witnesses are known for their amazing publication and witnessing activity. In every major city you will notice Jehova’s Witnesses displaying the *Awake* and *The Watchtower* magazine while enduring the ridicule of the secular population. Almost every household is visited by Jehova’s Witnesses at least once a year. Each issue of their *Awake* and *The Watchtower* magazines is printed more than ten million times in more than 80 languages and there is an apparently endless production of books – all written in an authoritative tone, very convincing to the uninformed reader.

Their current booklet *Knowledge that leads to Everlasting Life*, for instance, presents an excellent, easy to understand introduction into the foundations of what seems to be genuine Christianity. It contains, for example, a very good exposition about the uniqueness and the trustworthiness of the Bible. On the surface, they have very much in common with faithful believers. So to the unsuspecting observer they only seem to be a bit extreme because they are so eager to stand up for God in an ungodly world.

History

This exactly is the claimed purpose of the *Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society* – the organization which we know today as Jehova’s Witnesses. It was founded in 1884 by Charles Taze Russell who viewed most of orthodox Christianity as corrupted and began to build his own system of Bible interpretation. His ideas were widely circulated through a seven volume book called *Studies in the Scripture* which has been distributed about 15 million times.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

In contrast to most other cults, Jehova's Witnesses focus on the Bible as their sole source of authority. But their interpretation of the Bible differs from orthodox Christianity in many essential points. They reject the doctrine of the trinity as unscriptural, deny the deity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit. Any assurance of salvation is virtually impossible because it depends on faithfulness, which is the reason why each Jehova's Witness spends hundreds of hours of witnessing per year.

In most other aspects Jehova's Witnesses share the orthodox beliefs. This makes it extremely difficult to detect the deception in their teachings, particularly because it has improved over the years. Only a few years ago, their foundational booklet openly attacked the doctrine of the trinity and other orthodox doctrines. But their more recent publications are much smoother. They just tell the story as *they* see it, which means that they describe Jesus as the Messiah, but simply never say that he is also co-equal with God the Father. An uninformed reader will hardly notice that something essential is missing here.

Most of the differences between the teachings of Jehova's Witnesses and orthodox Christianity are of that nature: a few words here, half a sentence there – that is all you may notice. But if you sum up all these tiny little differences they lead to a belief system that has little to do with the true Word of God.

How do we know? What is it that shows us that Jehova's Witnesses actually deviate from the word of God while claiming to be the only faithful followers? Let's look at our measuring rod – our own articles of faith – and compare.

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

Jehova's Witnesses strongly emphasize that for them the Bible is the ultimate source of authority. It is "*Jehova God's written word to mankind, revealing himself and expressing his purpose*". With such a strong devotion to the Word of God it appears strange that the doctrines of Jehova's Witnesses are so different from those of orthodox Christianity. Is the Word of God so ambiguous that it allows such different interpretations?

It is not. Actually, the ultimate source of authority for Jehova's Witnesses is not the pure Word of God, but the bible as translated and interpreted by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Russell's *Studies in the Scripture* and the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which appeared in 1961, differ from the conventional translations whenever this is necessary to verify specific doctrines. Many of the peculiar teachings of Jehova's Witnesses are smuggled into the text of their Bible itself. The differences are not very obvious: a few words here, a different sentence structure there – that is all you see. But the consequences of these modifications are severe.

At this point one might say that Jehova's Witnesses have a right to create their own translation if they think that their choice of words would make certain aspects clearer to today's society. This is certainly true. But if you compare the translation with the original Greek and Hebrew, you will find that it is not just a bit biased, but plain wrong. If you look up Bible dictionaries or were fortunate enough to have studied Hebrew or Greek for a few years, you will notice that the modifications of critical passages may appear acceptable in the English language, but are not warranted by the original text. **John 1:1**, for instance is translated:

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

And **Colossians 1:16-17** reads

For by him were all other things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all other things, and by him all other things consist.

By inserting the indefinite article into John 1:1 and the word *other* into Colossians 1:16-17, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* supports the Witnesses' doctrine that Jesus Christ is not co-equal with God the Father. In the translation of **Luke 23:43**: *Verily I say unto you today, you shall be with me in paradise.*

The comma has been shifted after the word *today*, which gives the whole sentence an entirely different meaning and allows a different teaching about paradise. In all three cases the Greek original does not allow the translations chosen by Jehova's Witnesses. In Colossians the word "other" does not occur at all. Luke 23:43 is a bit more tricky, because there are no commata in the original text. But the Greek grammar of the text does not allow to consider the word *today* as linked to the word *say*, so the traditional translation is correct. I will say more about John 1:1 and other false translations when we go into the specific doctrines.

So you have to be careful. Don't let a Jehova's Witness cite from his own Bible but ask him to open a conventional one and study the Word there. That may lead to a few disputes about the accuracy of the translation but most Witnesses are not even aware of that fact or will turn out to be unable to defend their translation. But very likely you will not run into this discussion and can focus on the pure Word of God instead. Maybe this will open their minds and make them able to see themselves that their doctrines are wrong.

God

For Jehova's Witnesses, God the Father is the only true God who *is now working out his purpose of vindicating his name, Jehova, and sovereignty, and blessing all faithful mankind through his kingdom*". Jehova is *one* person, self-contained and never lonely, omniscient, but not omnipresent – although his power extends everywhere. Jehova God is the supreme sovereign of the universe.

This description is close to how orthodox Christianity would characterize God the father. However, Jehova's Witnesses vehemently deny the doctrine of the trinity. They view it as a *false, unbiblical doctrine that would deny His almighty supremacy*". They consistently deny the deity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit.

In the first part of this paper, we have discussed the trinity of God, the deity of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit. There is plenty of biblical evidence for these doctrines although they are never spelled out explicitly in a single verse. But Jehova's Witnesses ignore these evidences or translate them away in their *New World Translation*. For them, the doctrine of the trinity is originated in ancient Babylonish paganism, and the central issue is to stand up for the vindication of the *name "Jehova"*, which they sometimes view as a requirement for salvation.

Creation

Almost all of Jehova's Witnesses's doctrines are built around an elaborate view of creation: Jehova God brought into being all that exists, both the material and the spiritual. Jesus Christ was God's first creation (thus his *son*) and was given *priority and preeminence among all God's creatures*". The Son then became the co-worker of Jehova through whom all else came into existence. Angels were created next, with Lucifer being the first of them – a prince almost equal to the only-begotten son, but later falling away. Finally, the heavens and the earth were created at God's command.

Jehova's Witnesses like to calculate: since the *ullnes rest* began some 6000 years ago, the Battle of Armageddon is near and *Christ's reign of 1000 years will begin immediately after it*", each of the creator's workdays was 7000 years long and mankind is 42,000 years old. The world itself may be much older, because the "silence" of Genesis 1:1 *may allow*" for a period of several billion years.

Jesus Christ

Jesus, the Christ is a created individual, the second greatest Personage of the universe. Jehova God and Jesus together constitute the Superior authorities.

The vehement denial of the deity of Christ is an outstanding feature of Jehova's Witnesses's doctrinal system. Actually, it is just a revival of an old heresy known as *Arianism*. To the Witness, Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but not Jehova God. He is the first-born son of God and lesser than Jehova. He was born as a Human (in the October of 2 B.C.) and did not possess immortality. But he *became* the Messiah when he was baptized by John (in Fall 29 A.D.) and acknowledged by God, died on a *stake* (not a cross) as ransom for our sin (in Spring 33 A.D.), and was resurrected immortal as a *spirit* (not a physical body) on the third day. There is no bodily resurrection and consequently there can be no second coming in the scriptural sense of that term.

To support these doctrines, many key passages of the bible are twisted in the *New World Translation*. **Philippians 2:6**, for instance, is translated as

who .. gave no consideration to a seizure, namely that he should be equal to God.

Which seems to say that Jesus never claimed to be equal to God. Quite the opposite is true if you look at the actual text.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

Reference is also made to **John 1:1-3**, which says

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

We think this is pretty plain. Jesus is *the Word* – Jehova's Witnesses agree to that – Jesus was there from the beginning, Jesus was with God, Jesus was identical with God, and He was the Creator of everything. But the Witnesses say that this is not so.

For them, Jesus is a created being – the “firstborn of creation”, so he was present since the beginning of creation but not earlier. They say he cannot be identical with God the Father, because the Bible says that the *Word* was *with* God. And since two persons cannot be identical, Jesus cannot be God. He was created by God as the very first there was and from then on he created all of the material world.

Sounds plausible – doesn't it? But there is a contradiction with the end of verse 1, which says that *the Word was God*. If you point that out to them, you will hear that the correct translation would be *the Word is a God*, which means exalted, but not identical with Jehova. Well, they are right in saying that the Greek doesn't use the definite article here, but the Greek sentence actually says *God was the Word*, so it is a statement about God the father. In English (and German as well), we can change the order of words without changing the meaning of the sentence, so *the Word was God* is also a correct translation while *the Word is a God* cannot be justified.

Jesus cannot be a created being because verse 3 clearly says that *without him nothing was created that was created*. So nobody else created him. The Greek term here is absolute and not restricted to material things. *Nothing* is more than just *no thing*. The English translation is a bit ambiguous here because there is no word in the English language to express this appropriately. The same holds for *in the beginning*, which in the Greek has a connotation of "always" and not of a starting moment. So Jesus was there not just since the beginning of creation but always.

Now someone may point out that the Bible speaks of Jesus as *the only begotten son of the Father (John 1:14)*. Doesn't that mean *created*? No it doesn't! The Greek original *monogenos* points at uniqueness in rank and relation and is not related to the word *gennao*, which means *to create*. The translators 300 years ago chose the words *only begotten* because at that time this clearly expressed that Jesus' relation to the Father was special and unique and that as the heir he was equal in rank with the Father. They couldn't use "the only son" because that would contradict the fact that all Christians are children of God. Today's understanding of *only begotten* is a little different, but it is difficult to find an English phrase that expresses the meaning of *monogenos* accurately.

I went into these details to show you how subtle the deception is. At a first glance you would hardly notice that the tiny little differences in the translation have any effect on our interpretation of God's word. But the doctrines derived from these tiny little twists are extremely different from what we believe.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not a person but defined as "Jehova's invisible energizing force that produces visible results experienced by men". To support this, the *New World Translation* never capitalizes references to the Holy Spirit and many passages referring to the Holy Spirit are modified accordingly. **Genesis 1:2**, for instance, is translated as: *And God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters*.

There are no attempts to explaining the Spirit's activities as helper, guide, advocate, comforter, or person who convicts of sin, which so clearly point out the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Man

Man was made by God about 42,000 years ago and given dominion over the earth. For the Witness, a man does not *have* a soul that is separate from the human body and can exist independently, but man *is a soul*. This soul is *not* immortal and thus death is the end of existence. Immortality is given as a reward for faithfulness. This concept is in sharp contrast to the orthodox understanding of **Genesis 2:7**

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Jehova's Witnesses point out that in this passage man *became* a living soul. But the body, made from the dust of the ground, is mortal and subject to death, while the soul – the breath of life – entered the body and gave it life. The breath of life is God's breath and indestructible. It will leave the body during physical death.

Man sinned and was expelled from the Garden of Eden lest he gain immortality of the *body*, as stated in **Genesis 3:22-23**. Jehova's Witnesses maintain that Adam would have lived forever on earth in his mortal state if he had not sinned. But because of his disobedience, death came into the world.

Since Jehova's Witnesses view body and soul as inseparable, their explanation of death and resurrection becomes quite complicated. For them, the first death is a *soul sleep*, a termination of existence, and resurrection is a re-creation according to the memory of God – not a restoration of the original body and soul.

Salvation

Salvation is the deliverance from the destructive power of sin, a redemption from the ultimate end of sin, which is everlasting death, annihilation.

For Jehova's Witnesses, Christ's atonement for sin is the ransom that overcame the power of sin and death and gave man a new chance – an opportunity to receive the gift of immortal life. Jesus Christ willingly gave up his perfect human life on earth and offset the inherited condemnation for Adam's family. He exchanged his human existence for the spirit existence and secured man an opportunity to live in paradise.

So far this sounds similar to what orthodox Christianity teaches, although we would possibly express it with different words. But salvation is only available for the *faithful ones who endure to the end*. All other will receive a “*destruction that lasts forever*”, that is annihilation.

Jehova’s Witnesses also have a very peculiar interpretation of **Revelation 7:4**:

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

For the Witness this means that only 144,000 will be able to share in heavenly glory with Jesus Christ. We are told that God has set certain requirements and qualifications for this the heavenly class: First, they have to exercise faith in God’s provision, the shed blood of Christ. This includes baptism, which symbolizes dedication and brings the Witnesses into the position to be justified and declared righteous before God. God then causes his active force or holy spirit to act upon them and acknowledges them as his sons. Second, they must demonstrate their dependability by maintaining integrity and carrying out their dedication faithfully until death.

The majority of Jehova’s Witnesses will not be able to be in that heavenly class. They will enjoy life in paradise on earth, provided that they pass the test of faithfulness during the “*illness*” in reign.

So salvation does not come by faith in Jesus Christ alone, but only by being a faithful, obedient, and enduring witness of Jehova God. There is *no assurance* that you can make it, which explains why Jehova’s Witnesses are so eager to witness to other people and endure the ridicule of the world. They need to work their way into paradise and even that doesn’t guarantee heavenly glory for them. On the other hand, there is no eternal punishment because all the unfaithful ones will be annihilated.

Things to come

The doctrine of Things to Come is based on a series of sophisticated calculations by which Jehova’s Witnesses were trying to predict the return of Christ and other details of the kingdom of God, like for instance the number of people who would be part of the heavenly kingdom.

At the end of the 19th century Charles Russell calculated the beginning of the heavenly kingdom to be the year 1914, which is 2520 years after Jerusalem was captured by Babylon. The 2520 years arose from a combination of **Daniel 4:16**,

Revelation 12:6, and **Ezekiel 4:6** which appears to spell out the time until God is acknowledged. Before 1914, this beginning of the heavenly kingdom was understood as the second coming of Christ and as judgment day.

Now that 1914 has passed without any visible event, Jehova's Witnesses had to develop a more elaborate doctrine lest they admit that their prediction was wrong. So they say now that the kingdom of God is *entirely heavenly* and that Christ's second coming already took place in the spirit world. At that time the devil and all his demons were hurled down to earth – World War I is viewed as proof for this claim.

Four years later, in 1918, Jesus entered the spiritual temple and began to cleanse it. This marked the period of judgment: The 144,000 were chosen from among those already dead and those who will die subsequent to 1918. The judgment people living in the world were divided into "sheep and goats" according to their individual attitude toward Jehova's Witnesses and their message. The judgment is still going on as long as people are born into the world.

The battle of Armageddon is the next great event in history. In this battle Jesus Christ and his forces of righteousness will destroy Satan and his demonic and human organizations – such as organized religion and the United Nations – and vindicate Jehova's universal sovereignty. Armageddon's survivors will enter the Millennium on earth. During that time the faithful will be raised, as well as those who tried but died without opportunity to learn. The latter will be taught and then – like the others – go through a thousand year test of faithfulness. Only those who pass this "ullness" m test will later enter paradise. The others will, together with Satan and his followers, be thrown into the lake of fire and annihilated.

Failing predictions caused a lot of trouble for Jehova's Witnesses. Subsequently they put many efforts into re-interpreting the meaning of words in order to support their teachings. Jehova's Witnesses are not willing to admit mistakes in their interpretation of the Bible – they rather elaborate complicated doctrines that are difficult to justify and twist the meaning of words than submitting to the pure Word of God. Because of a deep distrust in all established religions and worldly organizations they often appear extremely stubborn and indoctrinated when confronted with the truth. It does not make much sense to dispute doctrines on an abstract level.

But you have something which they miss – assurance of salvation. Your individual testimony, coupled with questions about their personal beliefs, may help them to see beyond their narrow horizon and understand what the gospel really says.

11. The Way International

This group shares many of its fundamental beliefs with Jehova's Witnesses although it gives different justifications for them. It is called *The Way International*, a relatively small cult which attracted a lot of attention in the 1970s as it grew rapidly.

According to its own definition *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 so that everyone who so desires 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.*

Power for abundant living – this is what *The Way International* promises its followers. Capitalizing on the lifelessness of traditional churches who failed to fill the spiritual needs of today's society and the enthusiasm of the younger generation *The Way International* purports to give a new light on the Scriptures. This new light, which is taught in various classes offered by *The Way*, is the result of over thirty years of biblical research and teaching by its founder, Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille. In his many books and videos Wierwille demonstrates an impressive use of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic – together with appropriate explanations – to interpret Scripture. However, his style is very dogmatic and critical and – unfortunately – often very far away from orthodox Christian doctrines.

History

Dr. Victor Paul Wierwille received a Master of Theology degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and served as a minister of the Evangelical and Reformed Church from 1941 to 1957. During that time, he claims, God audibly spoke to him:

He spoke to me just as plainly as I'm talking to you now. He said he would teach me the Word as it had not been known since the first century if I would teach it to others.

God, he testifies, later gave him a sign in confirmation of his voice. He later received "the holy spirit" (*not capitalized!*) and began to speak in tongues.

For Wierwille, this was the starting point of his true mission. He started broadcasting radio shows, went back to school to receive a doctorate, and began to teach the new truths that he had "received" from God, among which his "*Power for abundant living*" class has become the most popular one.

The Way, the name was taken from **Acts 9:2**, was officially chartered in 1955 and began to grow rapidly in the sixties and seventies. Videos and long-term training programs were developed and translated into several languages. After the death of Dr. Wierwille in 1986, *The Way* went through a phase of re-

organization by its current president and experienced a short period of decline. Recently, however, membership has begun to grow again and *The Way* still needs to be taken serious.

The organizational structure of *The Way International* is likened to a tree. After taking the basic “*Power for abundant living*” classes, new members (viewed as leaves) join a home bible study group – called a twig – where they meet for worshiping and studying the word – usually guided by videos or audio tapes. Branches, limbs (state), trunks (national), and the root (headquarter) are further steps in the hierarchy of *The Way*. As in the catholic church, this structure has also become a doctrinal hierarchy – the views of *The Way’s* president are often viewed as the only acceptable interpretation of the Word of God.

Although *The Way* has attracted only a few hundred thousand members and lost many again of them after a few years it has attracted the attention of the media in the 1970’s because of its rapid growth and became popular particularly among younger people. Like all new religious groups, *The Way* has become subject of various rumors, including brainwashing techniques for acquiring new members and paramilitary training, most of them not being true. As far as size and religious practices are concerned, *The Way* is not a dangerous cult. However, its teachings are a cause for concern, because they attract the spiritually needy but mislead them at the same time – even if they do not become members.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

The beliefs of *The Way International* have been characterized as a mixture of evangelical Christianity, illnessism, and a few ancient heresies which *The Way* shares with Jehova’s Witnesses and other cults. Many of the teachings of Dr. Wierwille can be seen in accordance to orthodox Christianity. But the few deviations – such as the denial of the Trinity, of the deity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Spirit – are essential and should not be considered as acceptable. So let us look at the specific teachings of *The Way* and compare them to our own articles of faith.

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

The one and only recognized source of authority is the Bible, although it is distinctively re-interpreted by the founder. Wierwille considers the gospels as part of the Old Testament and only the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles addressed to the church are apply to today’s believers. The remainder of the Bible is “for our learning” but are not as relevant. This is at least an unusual view because traditionally we consider *all* of the Bible as relevant for today’s life.

2. Timothy 3:16 says

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

Wierwille does not brush this verse away, but states that the Word was *originally* God-breathed and has been confused over the centuries by man-made doctrines and traditions. He claims, for instance, that the original text of the New Testament was Aramaic, not Greek, and bases his interpretations on the available Aramaic texts.

He is not entirely wrong with his claims. Churches need to be careful not to confuse the true Word of God with man-made traditions, and parts of the New Testament (the Gospel of Matthew) may have been written originally in Aramaic. But that is exactly what makes the teachings of Wierwille so dangerous. A bit of justified criticism, mixed with partial truths and peculiar interpretations of the Word of God – this catches those who are not already firm in their faith and causes many to view *The Way* as a sound Christian group with a specific mission.

For members of *The Way*, the doctrines taught in the *Power for abundant living* classes have almost the same authority as the Scriptures they are supposed to interpret. Former members report that it was difficult to get justifications for these teachings that are based on scripture alone. The argument “*it simply is so*” is often used to end a discussion when no consensus could be reached. Wierwille claims to have received his insights directly from God, but many of his teachings were actually inspired by various books that he read in the thirties and forties.

God

Like Jehova’s Witnesses *The Way* teaches that God the Father is the only true God and Creator of heaven and earth. The doctrine of the Trinity is vehemently rejected. The clearest New Testament verse **1 John 5:7**

For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (Different from what is written in our Bible).

is viewed as one example where a doctrine made its way into the text of the Bible. This is probably correct, because this verse is not found in any Greek manuscript that is older than 500 years. The use of the plural word *Elohim* in the Old Testament is explained as indicative of supremacy and lordship – a plural of majesty. This is certainly possible, though not very likely interpretation of the use of the plural word *Elohim* for God. But Wierwille ignores the fact that there are many other biblical evidences for the doctrine of the trinity that cannot be re-interpreted otherwise. Among those are verses that clearly point out the deity of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Wierwille's counter-arguments about the Trinity raise a few new issues that need to be addressed.

Jesus Christ

In 1975 Wierwille wrote a book with the title *Jesus Christ is not God*. This book summarizes the key points in *The Way's* doctrine.

1. *God is eternal while Jesus was born*. Jesus did not coexist with God, neither as spirit nor in any other form, before his human birth. John 1:1 is interpreted as: *In the beginning was the Word (that is God the father), and the revealed Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

12. Jesus Christ is the *created Word*, that was with God *in His foreknowledge* from the beginning.

So there are three forms of the Word – the *original Word* (God himself), the *written Word* (the Bible) and the *created Word* (Jesus). The latter two are what Wierwille calls the *revealed Word*, which God gave in order to communicate with mankind.

So Jesus Christ is the Son of God, brought into existence by God in Mary's womb, the perfect man; the promised Messiah, who died as a substitute for our sins and was raised again by God on the third day – but *he is NOT God himself*.

Scriptures like **John 10:30**, where Jesus clearly states “*I and my Father are one*” are brushed aside by re-interpretation. Wierwille holds that this would mean only “*one in purpose*”. But this argument completely ignores the violent reaction of the Jews – they certainly took it as much more than one in purpose and Jesus adds to his claim in **John 10:38**, when he says “*the Father is in me, and I in him*”.

Other verses like **Hebrews 1:2** or **Ephesians 3:9** which explicitly state that all things were created *by* Jesus Christ are re-interpreted as “*created for* Jesus Christ”. While the original text may allow such an interpretation, the immediate context does not justify it. So again we see that Wierwille's arguments for his peculiar doctrines are quite deceiving and not so easy to refute unless you know the context of Bible passages very well.

There are a few other peculiarities in *The Way's* teachings about Jesus Christ. They claim that Jesus Christ died on a Wednesday and was raised exactly 72 hours later on a Saturday. Like Jehova's Witnesses they say that Jesus died on a stake, not a cross. Also there were four men crucified with Christ – two thieves (according to **Matthew 27:38**), and two malefactors (according to **Luke 23:32**). The Aramaic words *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* In **Matthew 27:46**, translated as

“*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” are re-interpreted as “*My God, my God, for this purpose was I spared, for this purpose was I kept, for this purpose I came into the world*”, which takes the unique relation between Jesus and God the father away from this verse.

Neither of these peculiarities have any significance for *The Way's* teachings other than to support Wierwille's claim that he alone is able to accurately interpret God's word. But There is no sound scriptural basis for these teachings and the traditional doctrines are much better supported by the overall context of the Bible.

The Holy Spirit

The Way strongly rejects the doctrine that the Holy Spirit is an independent person. In his interpretation of the Bible Wierwille distinguishes between the person of the Holy Spirit, which is just another name for God, and *holy spirit* (uncapitalized), which is a gift of God to the believers. The latter is not a person but a manifestation of God's power in a person.

Man

The Way's doctrine of Man is orthodox: man was created in God's image, sinned and experienced spiritual death. All humans have a sinful nature and need redemption.

Salvation

Salvation is by faith in Christ. Any person who confesses Jesus Christ as his Lord and believes that God raised him from the dead is born again and a member of the body of Christ. This is essentially the orthodox doctrine but weakened by the denial of the deity of Christ. In fact, Wierwille goes as far as writing that “*If Jesus Christ is God and not the Son of God, we have not yet been redeemed*”, because this would degrade God from his supreme position. But without the deity of Christ, the atonement would not have been the perfect sacrifice and perfect substitute for the sins of all men.

For *The Way* there are two immediate consequences of salvation: the deliverance from the powers of darkness and the gift of holy spirit.

Wierwille teaches that “*when we have salvation, we have wholeness – even physical wholeness if we simply accept it*. Complete healing from any sickness or disability is available to all believers. Although this is not a matter of extreme emphasis, it is often pointed out as an additional incentive for those who are searching. Ironically, Dr. Wierwille himself suffered from various diseases in the last years before his death. This fact was well hidden from the public but revealed after his death in 1985. He died after a long and hopeless battle against cancer – apparently not even “the chosen instrument of God” had not enough

faith to become physically whole, but he was too stubborn to admit that he was wrong.

Speaking in tongues is another major issue that *The Way* shares with the "Wellness" movement. An individual, so it is taught, receives the gift of holy spirit when he is saved, which comes in all 9 manifestations listed in **1 Corinthians 12** (tongues, interpretation, prophecy, word of wisdom, discerning spirits, faith, miracles, and healing). Speaking in tongues is viewed as the visible sign of salvation and *The Way* encourages every believer to use that gift for his own and the other's edification.

There are two problematic aspects with this teaching. First, the Bible nowhere teaches that every believer receives the gift of speaking in tongues. **1 Corinthians 12:10** lists it as one possible gift. Members of *The Way* who cannot speak in tongues will always doubt whether they are really saved. Secondly, the speaking in tongues is no unique sign of salvation. In fact, it was practiced by many pagan religions which had nothing to do with the only true God. Accepting tongues as a sign for salvation will give some people a false sense of assurance.

Things to come

The Way's views of the Things to come is no different from the orthodox doctrines. Jesus Christ will return personally, the just and unjust will rise and be judged, resulting either in eternal life or eternal punishment.

Special Aspects

There are, however, a few peculiarities that deserve a brief discussion. *The Way* shares with the "Wellness" movements a strong emphasis on tongues and healing, which usually is very fascinating for unbelievers, and a strong belief in authority and "church hierarchies". While the Bible does teach us to respect and support our leaders, it nowhere says that we have to believe all they say.

The fact that the strong authoritative structure of *The Way* is merely an issue of "power" became quite obvious after the death of Dr. Wierwille in 1985. There was a brief struggle for leadership and the current president quickly purged the organization from opponents, apostates, and any connection to the name Wierwille. *The Way* is now the "kingdom" of Reverend Craig Martindale – concerning both leadership and official teachings.

For a certain time, it was unofficially taught that extra-marital sex is not sinful but could actually be profitable for spiritual growth. This view was based on the old Corinthian belief that bodily practices do not affect the spirit of a person. Although this was never taught publicly, it made adultery an acceptable practice, which

again made *The Way* more appealing for today's society than traditional churches who clearly refused any tolerance of sexual misconduct.

The fact that *The Way* deviates from orthodox Christianity only in doctrines that are not immediately important for the spiritually needy, makes it more dangerous than cults that are clearly distinct from Christian beliefs. There are many people in this world who try to get right with God and organizations like *The Way* make it easier for them to find a spiritual home than most of the traditional churches. They notice that the water they drink contains some impurities, but they are so thirsty that they take it anyway.

The success of pseudo-Christian cults should be a lesson for the bible-believing churches. Are we ready to fill the spiritual needs of the unbelievers? Or are we so holy that we don't associate with them before they come into our church and turn to Christ? Paul said it this way (**1 Corinthians 9:20-21**)

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

13. Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God

The *Worldwide Church of God* owes its beginning to Herbert W. Armstrong, who like many cult leaders claims to be the only one capable of correctly interpreting scripture.

History

Herbert W. Armstrong's interest in the Bible began in 1927 after his wife brought the particular teachings of her church, the *Church of God – Seventh Day*, to his attention. Trying to prove them wrong he studied their beliefs intensively and finally accepted them. In 1933, he was ordained a minister of that church and shortly afterwards began broadcasting a radio program called *The Radio Church of God* and publishing a magazine called *The Plain Truth*. Because his teachings deviated more and more from that of the *Church of God – Seventh Day* his ordination was later revoked. He continued his ministry by radio and magazine and eventually founded his *Worldwide Church of God*.

While the church itself never grew larger than about 100,000 members, its radio and television programs reached millions of Americans. About 8 million copies of *The Plain Truth* magazines were sold each month in 187 countries. During its peak time the church reported donations of more than 200 million dollars per year, which is due to an extreme emphasis on works and over-tithing as requirement for salvation.

Armstrong's message was a mixture of Seventh Day Adventism, Jewish observances of the law, and specific cultist doctrines which were claimed to be special revelations from God. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote

The prophecies and mysteries of God, sealed until now, are today revealed to those whom God has chosen to carry his last message to the world as a witness

and also claims that his *Worldwide Church of God* is the only true church of God while all others are counterfeits. Yet most of his doctrines are very similar to those of Jehova's Witnesses, Mormonism, and British Israelism – thus in no way unique to Armstrong. There was also a major focus on predictive prophesy. For instance, it was predicted that Jesus Christ would return in 1975, which of course did not happen and caused the church to lose many members in the late seventies.

Shortly before his death in 1986, Armstrong passed his authoritarian power as Pastor General to Joseph Tkach, a member of the board who had worked up through the ranks because of his unswerving loyalty to Armstrong. Ironically, Tkach used his power to change the *Worldwide Church of God's* doctrines after Armstrong's death to a more orthodox position, despite a widespread opposition among members. By 1995 the *Worldwide Church of God* had eventually become a bible-believing church, which today (July 1999) is even admitted by the most [ullness] anti-cult organizations.

The only criticism is that the church still maintains its authoritarian leadership structure as well as a certain lack of fiscal responsibility, and declares that it really has been "Christian" all the time, which is hard to understand given the radical changes of the past 13 years. However, we can praise God for turning the Church around. It is one of the most striking examples how God uses his Word to "demolish strongholds" – as **2 Corinthians 10:4** says – which by human terms already seemed invincible.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

In what we will discuss today I will focus on the time before the changes, that is on *Armstrongism*. As I mentioned, Armstrong did reach millions of Americans and certainly influenced many who never joined his church but brought his teachings into other churches. Like the Mormons, Armstrongism denies the Trinity but believes that every man can eventually become God. As Jehova's Witnesses, he sees Jesus Christ as a God, but inferior to God the Father. Like both, it teaches salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and additional obedience to the law. But there are a few new doctrines that we have not discussed so far.

Central to Armstrong's teachings is the belief in *British Israelism*, which strongly influences the way in which the bible is interpreted. The basic theory of British

Israelism is that the Anglo-Saxons, that is Britain and its former empire, are the ten lost tribes of Israel. The argument goes roughly as follows.

1. God's promise to Abraham was to be the father of many nations of which the Jews are only one (Judah).
2. God's promise to David was to establish his throne forever (**2. Samuel 7:13**) so it must exist today.
3. Israel lost its identity in 721 B.C., when its people were taken captive and became known as the *ten lost tribes*.
4. According to Jacob's prophecy Ephraim was promised to become a multitude of nations, a commonwealth – which must be today's Great Britain.

14. Manasseh is the United States.

This theory, which came up way before Armstrong's times, is supported by a massive abuse of language. The name Saxon's is supposed to be derived from Isaac-son while British is composed from the Hebrew words *Brit* – meaning *covenant* – and *Ish* – meaning *man*. While composed foreign words did make their way into the English language, this explanation must be viewed as pure fantasy without any evidence.

Nevertheless, there are quite a few British and American cults, Armstrongism included, which hold to that teaching because it gives them a special role as God's chosen people.

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

The only recognized source of authority in the *Worldwide Church of God* is said to be the Bible. However, Armstrong claimed that his church has the only true interpretation of the Word of God, which essentially says that you cannot interpret the Bible yourself. So the final authority for members of the *Worldwide Church of God* were Armstrong's writings and not the text of the Bible.

God

God is the creator, the beginner, the one who caused us to have life, and so is called our father.

At a first glance, Armstrong seems to have an orthodox concept of God. However, he declares the doctrine of the trinity to be pagan and teaches instead that ``*God is a family, a kingdom, NOT a limited trinity*'. This family consists

currently only of God the Father and the God of Abraham, who later became Jesus Christ, the son of God. But God's intent, Armstrong teaches, is to reproduce himself. All children of God will eventually become God as well, who ``*will counsel and advise our Creator*'`.

This is very close to what the *eternal progression* in Mormonism expresses but it goes to an even greater extreme.

Jesus Christ

Christ has existed from all eternity with the Father. He is one with the Father, but he is subordinate to him.

In contrast to Mormonism, Jehova's Witnesses, or the Way International, Armstrong teaches that Jesus Christ is co-eternal and one with God the Father. In fact *HE* was Jehova, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was *not* the son of God before he was born of the virgin Mary. And in the incarnation, he ceased to be God and became fully man. As a man he developed the perfection of spiritual character that was necessary to become our savior and to pay the penalty for our sin.

Crucified on a Wednesday, he ceased to exist for 3 days and was raised again on Saturday at the end of the Jewish Sabbath. But his body disappeared. He was no longer human but an immortal divine being and again a member of the family of God.

In contrast to what the Bible teaches (e.g. **Philippians 2:6**) that Jesus never ceased to be God, although he limited himself to a human form. His body was raised as his disciples could clearly testify. **John 20:20** and **20:27** are very specific about that.

The Holy Spirit

Armstrong flatly denies the personality of the Holy Spirit. As for Jehova's witnesses, for him the Holy Spirit is just the ``*mind and the very power of God, which expresses the unified, creative will of the God family*'`. It is what we receive during conversion.

Man

The creation of mankind, so Armstrong teaches took place approximately 6000 years ago. Man was created as a living soul with a potential for immortality. But the fall was planned and permitted by God. Otherwise, so it is argued, Satan would have outwitted God and this cannot be.

Like Jehova's Witnesses the *Worldwide Church of God* taught that the soul is NOT immortal. It goes into a phase of *soul sleep* after death and only becomes immortal at the resurrection of the righteous. The souls of the unrighteous, however, will be annihilated at the judgment.

Salvation

Armstrong's concept of salvation involves both faith and works. Acceptance of Jesus Christ cleanses from past sins and enables to keep the law. But justification will only be given on the condition that the law is kept. Only those who develop spiritually shall finally be given immortality. So under Armstrong a member of the *Worldwide Church of God* could never have any assurance of salvation. He could only try hard to observe all kinds of religious laws:

Water Baptism

is viewed as absolute essential. *“There is no promise that anyone will receive the Holy Spirit until baptized in water.”*

The bible clearly separates these two events. You receive the Holy Spirit immediately when you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Water Baptism is a sign of obedience but not necessary for salvation.

Sabbath:

“To break God's Holy Sabbath is sin and the penalty is eternal death”

This teaching is apparently derived from the former doctrines of the Seventh Day Adventists and is clearly unbiblical. Armstrong is correct in observing that we are often too negligent about observing the Lord's Day. But the emphasis on the Sabbath (Saturday) is not supported by the New Testament, and – like any other sin – it certainly does not lead to eternal death.

However, teaching this doctrine is a good trick for making the congregation attend church regularly, and that was apparently the intended effect.

Observance of annual feast days:

But besides the Sabbath, the *Worldwide Church of God* required its members to keep a variety of Jewish annual feasts. These are the *Passover*, the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, *Pentecost*, the *Feast of Trumpets*, and the *Day of Atonement*. To each of these festivals,

Armstrong gave an additional Christian interpretation, like the Lord's Supper during Passover or the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

The 10 commandments:

However, celebrating Christmas, Easter, New Years Day, and even birthday is considered as idolatry. According to Armstrong, the second commandment (**Exodus 20:4**) excludes such festivals. The interpretation of the other commandments is similarly strict. The seventh commandment, for instance, is said to mean that only a first marriage is valid. Divorce is sinful for whatever reason (which is basically correct if you consider all aspect that eventually led to a divorce) and marriage after a divorce is adultery.

However, every sin can be forgiven and divorce is not the "unpardonable sin".

The Dietary regulations

of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are mandatory, as are the decisions of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. No consideration is given to the context of these requirements.

Smoking is considered a sin, drinking alcoholic beverages is not. The Bible does not condemn either of the two, but it condemns excess (drunkenness) and reminds us in **1. Corinthians 3:16-17** that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and should not be defiled. Christian churches have different opinions about how to interpret that, because it is not entirely clear what "defiling" means and what is beneficial for our body. This is one of the issues where I often see traditions decide on the doctrines of a local church.

1 Corinthians 10:31 gives us a good guideline for that. *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

Tithing

was and still is a major emphasis in the *Worldwide Church of God*. In practice this includes a first tithe (10 percent), a second, sometimes even a third. Some members feel obliged to give 30-40% of their income to the church out of fear that otherwise they will not be saved. Their money goes directly to the headquarter of the *Worldwide Church of God* and is managed by the Pastor General.

This seems to be a reminder of the practices of the Roman Catholic church in the late middle ages. Tithing in the *Worldwide Church of God* has become the modern equivalent to indulgences: the church headquarter becomes extremely rich while the members try to buy their way into heaven because they have no assurance of salvation.

Tithing is a necessary act of obedience. If we steal from God by withholding our tithe (or parts of it) from Him, we will experience difficulties to grow spiritually. But that does NOT mean that tithing is necessary for salvation.

Armstrong takes his justification for these requirements from the Old Testament and **Matthew 5:17-18**, where Jesus states that he did not come to change the law. So under the "Armstrong covenant" the believer is still under the law and the only advantage over those who did not accept Christ is that he is able to keep it.

Things to come

In his various publications and courses Armstrong claims that he would be able to interpret biblical prophecy and to reveal the future like no one else. He maintained this position even after his failed prediction that the world would end in 1972.

According to Armstrong we are already in the last days that precede the Great Tribulation. The Tribulation will last 3-1/2 years and will then be followed by a time of God's wrath – the sixth seal of **Revelation 6:12-13**. During that time the faithful will be protected in Petra, the ancient rock-walled city on Edom. The climax of this period will be the second coming of Christ.

After the battle of Armageddon, the first resurrection will take place: the just will rise, become immortal, and reign together with Christ for 1000 years. Those "*who haven't had a fair chance to hear the truth*" will partake in the second resurrection during the "ullness" m. They will hear the gospel and have a second chance to convert. Those who don't will be cast into the lake of fire. After the judgment of the great white throne, the "*handful of recalcitrant sinners*" will be resurrected and cast into the lake of fire – which for Armstrong is the same as annihilation.

Many of these "revelations" appear to be a combination of human imagination and biblical terminology. There is no second chance to believe in Christ, not even for those who died before Christ came to earth – they had other means to receive forgiveness of sin. The bible clearly says in **Hebrews 9:27** that after death everybody will face judgment. And those who are condemned will not be annihilated but punished forever.

None of the doctrines of Armstrongism were really new. It appears that Armstrong was influenced by many other cults at the time, and his doctrines can be refuted in the same way we would prove the Mormons or Jehova's Witnesses wrong. However, the mixture and a few details were new and for some people

Armstrongism appeared easier to accept than Mormonism or Jehova's Witnesses. Millions of Americans have been reached by Armstrong's messages and even Christians have accepted some of them as plausible interpretations of the Word of God. This is the real danger of Armstrongism today and we must keep our eyes open lest we be seduced to accept interpretations of the Bible that have little to do with the truth.

15. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church

The cults that we have discussed so far are very close to orthodox Christianity in the sense that they are easily mistaken as "the real thing" by those who do not know the Word of God very well. We will now come to those cults that mix in elements from other religions and make claims that are simply absurd from the Christian perspective. Nevertheless, they find enough followers, particularly among those who feel spiritually needy but are quite distant from the Christian faith. They promise them a spiritual solution to their problem, inner healing, and true fellowship – and all this sounds so much more believable than the preaching of the many lifeless Christian churches. They are usually backed up by a powerful organizational structure with a lot of financial support, and a strong public presence – particularly on the World Wide Web, which they use to recruit new members.

Sun Myung Moon's *Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity*, briefly called the *Unification Church* or sometimes simply the *Moonies*, claims that

We now have the means to heal all modern-day human problems, exalt every human soul, and bring the kingdom of God within the reach of every man.

According to Reverend Sun Myung Moon, a title he gave to himself when he founded his church in 1954, this all-embracing claim is based on new revelations from God which were given to him in order to "complete the task of establishing God's kingdom on earth and bringing peace to mankind". Briefly told, this new revelation teaches that ever since the fall, God has been trying to rectify his creation but has not succeeded. He has worked through chosen champions, but none of them found acceptance among men. Abel, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and even Jesus Christ – they all failed. So it became necessary for the Messiah to return to earth again as *Lord of the Second Advent* and to find his perfect bride. They will become the *true parents*, the first couple that through God's power is able to lead a sinless life, to bring forth children with no original sin, and thus to re-establish the true lineage of God on earth. All humankind can be engrafted into this lineage by receiving the blessing of God through the *true parents*, and thus the kingdom of God on earth will be restored.

These claims, taken directly from the original web pages of the *Unification Church*, are in sharp contrast to our understanding of the Word of God. But the *Unification Church* states that our rather literal interpretation of the Word of God is wrong and that all its doctrines are actually taught by the Bible – we only have to understand the *divine principles* behind its figurative language.

History

The teachings of the *Unification Church* are strongly tied to the personal history of its founder, Sun Myung Moon. On Easter morning 1935, he claims, Jesus Christ appeared to him and asked him to complete the mission that he had begun 2000 years ago. Moon, who was 15 at the time, began studying the Bible and many other religious teachings to find out what Jesus had left undone on earth.

In 1945 he organized his findings into what later became known as the *Divine Principle* and began to preach publicly in North Korea. Shortly afterwards, he was arrested by the Communist regime for “disturbing the social order” and sentenced to forced labor. In 1950, during the Korean War, he was rescued by United Nations forces and subsequently began preaching again.

In 1954 he officially established his new church in Seoul, calling it the *Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity*. His church attracted many followers from a Christian women’s university in South Korea. This stirred up newspaper reports about sex orgies in the Church and about Moon’s own marital affairs. Rumors of this nature overshadow the *Unification Church* until this day, although there has never been a definite proof for them.

In 1960 Moon was married to his current wife, Hak Ja Han. The *Unification Church* teaches that this union marked the beginning of the restoration of humankind. By God’s power, Moon and his wife were made able to lead a sinless life and thus established the position of *True Parents*. Consequently their nine children are the first human beings without original sin. Moon calls himself “*Father of the Universe*” and his followers see him as a messianic leader who deserves undivided obedience.

When Moon moved to the United States in 1971, his Church attracted many young Americans who struggled with spiritual emptiness and readily accepted Moon’s teachings which seemed to be so close to the twisted understanding of spirituality in the seventies. His church grew quickly and Moon himself became very popular. He was invited to the White House and was given opportunity to address members of the US Congress. Soon “*Moonies*” were seen selling flowers and candy in almost all public places. This, in fact, turned out to be the main source of income for the *Unification Church* and subsequently attracted the

IRS, which indicted him for evading income taxes. Moon served another sentence in prison, but was later set free after a Senate subcommittee investigated his case.

Today, the *Unification Church* has about 100,000 members in the U.S.A. and about 3 million worldwide. But reports about abusive practices within Moon's church have come up over and over again. Allegations about sexual abuse were made as well, particularly by those who visited his camps in South East Asia. Although these reports need to be weighed carefully, we can almost be sure that the *Unification Church* abuses its members as far as their labor, finances, and spiritual needs are concerned.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

From a Christian's perspective, the teachings of the *Unification Church* have become more and more absurd. In 1992, Sun Myung Moon openly proclaimed to be the *Lord of the Second Advent*, the return of *Messiah*. He is the true owner of this world, so he said in 1997, and salvation can only come to those who are engrafted into *his* lineage. This also means that learning Korean will be mandatory for everyone to be saved, because this is the language of the *True Parents*. Those who reject Sun Myung Moon will perish, and this is why America has been declining. The "*one nation under God*" will cease because God's final purpose is "*one world under God*" and this can only be established in the lineage of the *True Parents*, that is Moon and his wife.

It is hard to understand how anyone in the world can believe such boastful claims of a man who provides no evidence for his teachings. The reason for that may be the slow evolution of Moon's teachings, which caused people to gradually accept everything said by Sun Myung Moon. If one accepts Moon's way of interpreting the Bible, his claim that there must be a second Messiah coming to earth is not so absurd anymore. If a naive observer then looks at Sun Myung Moon's life, the "persecution for God's sake" and his "unfailing willingness to serve", he may in fact accept that Sun Myung Moon could be God's chosen instrument. From then on he believes everything that "Reverend Moon" says.

So, let us look at his teachings and uncover the flaws that have led so many people astray. How does Moon justify the claims he makes.

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

Although Sun Myung Moon's church aims at the Unification of World Christianity, the Christian Bible is not the only source of authority. In fact, the Bible is subject to a new interpretation as laid out in Sun Myung Moon's *Divine Principle*. On 536 pages, this book presents a "*set of principles, based on the patterns which Reverend Moon found in the Bible during his years of search*". Without these

principles, it is said, the Bible cannot be understood correctly. So the *Divine Principle* has become the true source of authority for the *Unification Church*.

One of the principles given by Sun Myung Moon is that the Bible often needs to be understood symbolically instead of literally. He writes, for instance, that “we cannot believe that God would implant in Adam and Eve a desire to rebel against him and destroy themselves for the sake of a piece of fruit. So the fruit must signify something far more important than a tasty apple or pear”. So, because the common sense in the 20th century cannot grasp anymore the meaning of trust and the severeness of breaking even a “simple” promise, the most straightforward interpretation of the fall is to be brushed away. Moon replaces it by an interpretation that makes far less sense to me: “the sin of Adam and Eve must have involved a sexual act”, that is “Adam and Eve engaged in a premarital sexual relationship and thus they fell.”

For the uninformed reader, this argument may seem plausible because it is built on the traditions and value systems of the late 20th century, which hypocritically distinguishes “small sins” – that is what society tolerates – from the “big sins” which we find morally unacceptable. But God doesn’t have a scale for the graveness of sins. Adultery and premature sex is not worse in God’s eyes than lies and broken promises – these are all sins and unacceptable for God. Besides, Moon is even wrong about the “premarital”. God had already blessed the union of Adam and Eve in **Genesis 1:28** – and that did not happen after the fall. And how shall a human being have physical intercourse with Satan, a spirit being?

So Moon’s *Divine Principle*, which he supports by many writings of eastern religions, is actually a very human one, and he uses it to establish interpretations of the Bible that have nothing to do with the true meaning of the Word of God. Whenever you bring a verse that proves some of his teachings wrong he can simply “re-interpret it symbolically” and change its meaning to whatever he likes. In **2.Peter 1:16** the Apostle Peter writes

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sun Myung Moon does just the opposite in order to build up his own name.

God & Man

God himself told me that the most basic and central truth of his universe is that God is the Father and we are his children

God is the creator of all things, the absolute reality, eternally self-existent, transcendent of time and space. So far Moon’s doctrines are orthodox. But before creating the universe, he writes (*DP 24*), God was *incomplete*. He existed

only as *internal masculine subject* and needed to create an external feminine subject to become complete. God cannot exist without man and man cannot exist without God. Thus man is ``*as important in value as as God himself*’. This concept of God is strongly related to the constant interplay between the Yang and Yin in the *Taoist* religion, which apparently influenced Moon a lot.

Man was created in order to fill the need of God to ``*share, give, and take with someone in a reciprocal relationship*’. Being in the image of God, we are to live our life for others as well. ``*Without this giving and taking between subject and object ... nothing endures for eternity*’. The kingdom of God will be here on earth, when there is God-involvement in every relationship.

According to Moon, this is the divine principle on which we have to base our life and our understanding of God’s word. The trinity is denied – there is only one God and the creation is his necessary counterpart. But the Bible nowhere mentions that God *needs* his creation. God is entirely self-sufficient. He doesn’t need us to be complete.

The Fall

Moon’s divine principle also leads to an entirely different understanding of evil, the fall, redemption, salvation, and the role of Jesus Christ. According to Moon, *evil* is the emergence of selfishness in the world. Lucifer resented God’s selfless love towards Adam and Eve and seduced Eve before God could complete his creation.

The fall, it is argued, was both *spiritual* and *physical*. The issue could not have been just a mere fruit – it must have been something more fundamental. And what can be a more fundamental act of selfishness than a sexual relation. So the *Unification Church* teaches that Eve had intercourse with Lucifer and ``received certain elements from him”. Hoping to get rid of these, she seduced Adam, and passed them on to him as well. Thus sin entered the once perfect lineage created by God and instead the evil lineage of Satan was multiplied.

Ever since, God has been trying to rectify this situation. He needed to erase the evil from his creation and to re-create the world of goodness. He needed to restore the sinless lineage – to create *True Parents* who would live in perfect obedience and complete unselfishness and would thus be able to have children without original sin. This would then be the beginning of a new world order – the kingdom of God on earth.

You need to twist the Word of God a lot to come to these doctrines. Moon, as I mentioned, emphasizes that the Bible uses a lot of symbolic language – which opens the door to every interpretation you like. He states that ``the religions of this world have served as tool for God” to re-create the world of goodness. Thus

the teachings of other religions are the means to unlock the secrets of the Word of God and Moon certainly borrows a lot from various eastern religions.

The Bible is very clear concerning the fall and there is no reason to assume that the description of the fall in **Genesis 3** should not be taken literally. Disobedience, however small, is sufficient to break the trust between God and man. Since the fall, no man except Jesus has ever been sinless: *There is none righteous, not even one* (**Romans 3:10**, see also **1. John 1:8**). No one will ever be able to have sinless children: the lineage of God will not be passed physically but only spiritually.

Jesus Christ

Moon`s teachings about Jesus Christ in the *Divine Principle* are not always clear. He was God`s champion, chosen to fulfill God`s mission on earth. He achieved perfection and thus ``*attained the purpose of creation*``. In the light of this, he may be called God, but he can by no means be called God Himself. In fact, ``*as a man he was no different from us except that he was without original sin*``.

Jesus came to earth to become the *True Parent* of mankind. Adam had failed – Jesus should re-create the true lineage of God on earth, so that God could have fellowship again. He was to find his chosen bride, the second Eve, and to ``*bring forth upon this earth his own sinless children. All mankind would have found life by grafting on to them*``. But Jesus did not find acceptance as Messiah and was murdered on the cross. That – so Moon writes – was not his purpose. In fact, in the Garden of Gethsemane he prayed desperately that this would not take place. He failed like many before him.

Nevertheless, he did not die in vain. His body decayed. But he was resurrected spiritually and through faith in Christ we will experience *spiritual rebirth*. However, the cross is unable to remove our original sin as it cannot achieve physical salvation.

So Jesus will have to come again as the Third Adam, the Lord of the Second Advent. He will come in the flesh, suffer many things and be rejected. But some will recognize him and the Kingdom of God will gradually appear. He will find his true bride and become the true parent and thus bring physical salvation to man kind. All religions will be united under him.. On the basis of **Revelation 7:2-4** and **14:1** it has been revealed to Sun Myung Moon that ``*Christ will be born in a country in the East – from the rising of the sun*`` – that nation is Korea. The Korean people will become the Third Israel.

The careful observer will not fail to notice that the description of the Lord of the Second Advent fits Sun Myung Moon very well. His followers have always viewed him as the promised Messiah, the perfect and sinless father, the True Parent through whom they can be born anew, the only one authorized by God to

forgive sins. But the claim to Messiahship has not been made publicly until 1992. On August 24, 1992 Sun Myung Moon made the following statement during his inauguration address for his World Culture and Sports Festival in Seoul

.. we are the savior, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah.

He has repeated this claim over and over again since then. The *Unification Church* now openly teaches that Sun Myung Moon is the new Messiah and that He and his wife are the *True Parents* of mankind. They are both sinless and their nine children are the first children born without original sin.

In the *Divine Principle*, Moon gives a lot of scriptural evidences for his teachings, again twisting the meaning of the Word of God by interpreting it symbolically. He was careful not to proclaim himself openly as Messiah for a long time. But now he states to have achieved what Jesus did not achieve. This almost makes him superior to Jesus in the eyes of his followers. It makes me wonder, why there was so little public outrage among Christians when Moon proclaimed Messiahship.

There are many bible passages that clearly prove Sun Myung Moon's teachings about Jesus wrong. In **Luke 24:44-48** Jesus explains that it was necessary for him to die on the cross and rise again. **Luke 24:36-39** and **Acts 2:29-31** are proof for the physical resurrection of Christ. **Acts 1:9-11** makes clear that Jesus will come again from heaven and not be born on earth again. Salvation is found in *no one else* but Jesus (**Acts 4:12, Romans 10:9**) and there will be no Lord of the Second Advent.

So Sun Myung Moon's doctrines are in sharp contradiction to the Word of God. **Colossians 2:8** and **Galatians 1:8** tell us what God thinks about such teachings.

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the principles of this world rather than on Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the feminine counterpart of God. She is not a person but a form of energy derived from God. She is the *True Mother* who will give rebirth to fallen children as children of goodness. (DP 215)

Salvation

Salvation is a complex subject for the *Unification Church*. Since Jesus died before accomplishing his mission, faith in Jesus Christ will only provide spiritual, but not physical salvation. Christ's coming as Lord of the Second Advent will complete His unfinished work. When *"the True Father and the True Mother become one, God will come down and become one with them on earth"* He will create the central persons through whom mankind can receive spiritual life. By *"accepting the True Parents, obeying them and following them `more than my own life' and by doing what the Messiah requires with great faith* a person's original sin will be eliminated and he will eventually become perfect.

"Restoration cannot be fulfilled by God's power alone, but is to be fulfilled by man's joint action with God". This clearly is salvation by works with no assurance, or – to be precise – by complete submission under Moon who can abuse his followers as much as he likes. This makes the *Unification Church* is a personality cult. Sun Myung Moon is the absolute authority of the Church in every respect. His followers have to work extremely hard for him if they want to have a chance for salvation.

Marriage is believed to be essential for salvation as well. Only the male and female together can represent God totally. In order to be saved, one has to be matched, married, and blessed by the *True Parents* in a ceremony in which one becomes symbolically part of his family – the true, pure, and sinless lineage of the Messiah. Over the years Sun Myung Moon has performed many mass wedding ceremonies for the members of his church – many of the couples hardly knew or had ever seen each other before. Former members also report that the marriage ceremony involved strange secret rituals that had the purpose to *"indemnify"* for the sin of Adam and Eve. There were also rumors about sexual abuse in this context but they have not been confirmed.

These doctrines have nothing to do with the Word of God. **Ephesians 2:8-9** says

For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Salvation is *only* by faith in Jesus Christ. You cannot work your way into heaven, and no sanctified ceremony will bring you there.

Things to come

Moon teaches that *"our body, once it is dissolved into dust, cannot be resurrected into its original state. It is not necessary for a spirit man to resume his flesh when there is a spirit world, where he is supposed to go and live forever"*. In brief – *there is no physical resurrection*. Jesus was resurrected only as a spirit being and so will we.

But “*spirit men who passed away to the spirit world without having perfected themselves must come again and fulfill the responsibility they left unaccomplished in their physical life*”. In this case, the earthly man is the “second coming” of the spirit man. John the Baptist, for instance, had to accomplish the mission Elijah had left unaccomplished. In other words – the *Unification Church* teaches *reincarnation* as it is taught by many eastern religions.

These teachings are embedded into an elaborate hierarchy of attainment, by which men will achieve entrance into the *Kingdom of Heaven on earth*. Fallen man must be raised to a proper relationship with God and go through three stages of perfection: a *form-spirit stage*, a *life-spirit stage*, and a *divine-spirit stage*. Until the time of Jesus, men attained the form-spirit stage by obedience to the law. Since the cross, men attained the life-spirit stage through faith in Jesus Christ. During the time of the Lord of the Second Advent, “*spirit men can attain the divine-spirit stage of perfect restoration by believing and serving the Lord of the Second Advent*.”

But a spirit can raise his level by intercommunicating with men on earth. By an active give and take between spirit and body the divine-spirit stage can be attained and the Kingdom of Heaven reached. “*The ultimate purpose of God is to save all mankind*” (DP 190). Hell is only a temporary condition and is in the world. The Kingdom of Heaven on earth is as yet vacant. It will be opened by the Lord of the Second Advent through the “*marriage of the lamb*”, that is his wedding with the Second Eve. This will re-establish the good lineage into which all mankind will eventually be engrafted. According to Moon, this event has happened by now.

Then men will live in communion with God and there will be God-involvement in every relationship. Thus the give and take between subject and object, the perfect relationship will be maintained – and God will be completely fulfilled in His creation.

The influence of eastern religions in all these teachings is obvious. Reincarnation, stages of perfection, and mutual dependence between God and man, - all this is nowhere taught in the Bible. It is appointed unto men to die once, and after this there will be judgment (**Hebrews 9:27**), where the dead will be judged according to their actions (**Revelation 20:12**). There is no second chance to improve your stage after death and the eternal fire is certainly a reality.

Special Aspects

In addition to teaching severely twisted doctrines under the mantle of Christianity, the *Unification Church* has become known for a variety of abusive practices, because – as former members report – the end justifies all means that eventually “*serve God’s purposes*”, probably a twisted interpretation of **Luke 16:8-9**.

So it is o.k. to use deception in order to gain a donation or workshop attendance from members of Christian churches. It is acceptable to use brutality to “separate Satan” from a member that appears not to be fully devoted to Sun Myung Moon.

Members are expected to give all they have and are to the Church. It is reported that some “Moonies” work 22 hours a day and fast several weeks in order to pay for their sin. All this, they are told, all this is nothing compared to what “Father”, that is Moon, does and one should feel indebted to “father” Moon.

Because of the strong discipline and commitment to the *Unification Church*, a member’s life is centered entirely around the church. It is the source of their religion, as well as their cultural, social, and other support systems. Consequently, they will find it very difficult to leave the organization if they become disillusioned by the *Unification Church*. Now to a certain extent this is true for Christian Churches as well. We aim at commitment and a strong fellowship.¹ But the degree of dependence in the *Unification Church* is another dimension, although it the alleged brainwashing of members has not been confirmed. Most people who have tried to leave the *Unification Church* came out unharmed, although very disappointed. They need our help.

It is also not clear how the *Unification Church* handles the money that comes in by donations and through the hard work of its members. The money does not flow back into the local groups and the few leaders of the Church are certainly able to lead a better life than most members. Allegations that the *Unification Church* is a business organization under the cover of religion – like for instance *Scientology* – have not been confirmed yet although the Church had been observed by the IRS. The handling of finances in the *Unification Church* is certainly a malpractice but this has happened in various evangelical organizations as well.

Summary

The presence of much biblical and Christian terminology in the *Unification Church* has led casual observers to conclude that Moon’s church is just another variant of Christianity. But its doctrines and practices are clearly heretical and Moon’s claim of Messiahship is simply outrageous. But we should not get worried. God’s answer to all this is already written down in **(2.Peter 2:1-3)**

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

16. Christian Science

In 1866, I discovered the divine laws of life, truth, and love, and named my discovery Christian Science.

The *Church of Christ, Scientist* – the official name of the organization that is usually known as *Christian Science* – claims to be the restoration of the true church established by Jesus Christ. According to Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Church, true Christianity means understanding the fundamental law by which Jesus Christ brought healing towards mankind. This law, until it was revealed to her, has been lost since the time of Christ.

Our Master practiced Christian healing, but he left no definite rule of healing and preventing disease. This rule remained to be discovered by Christian Science.

Studying the word of God under the guidance of Mrs. Eddy's writings is therefore the central duty of a Christian Scientist. Consequently, the *Church of Christ, Scientist* did not set up houses of worship where the word is preached, but *Reading Rooms* – that is local Christian Scientist libraries – where the members go to read Mrs. Eddy's works to aid their spiritual development. The reading rooms are complemented by various magazines published by the Mother Church in Boston, such as the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Christian Science Journal* and a few others.

History

The central aspect of *Christian Science* is *spiritual healing* – the healing of diseases without medicine. This is easy to understand if one considers the personal history of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy. Born into a devoutly religious family, she suffered from chronic illnesses and experienced a good deal of unhappiness. Her first husband died a few months before her first child was born, her second husband was unfaithful, and she did not find any cure for her diseases.

During that time she met a man named Phineas P. Quimby, who claimed to heal sicknesses without medicine and called his system ``*the Science of Christ*'. Quimby believed that illness and disease could be healed through positive thoughts and healthy attitudes – by changing one's beliefs about the illness. Since healthy attitudes do in fact have some positive influence on the healing process, Mrs. Baker's health suddenly improved – although only for a while – and she was convinced that he had discovered the methods of healing practiced by Jesus Christ. Later, however, she repudiated any indebtedness to Quimby, claiming to have gradually discovered the truth through divine power.

In 1866, a short time after Quimby's death, she began a healing ministry and taught her system to pupils for a fee of \$300.-, which was a lot of money at the time. In 1875 she completed the book "*Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*" which now is considered to be *the* main reference for the Christian Scientist. 4 years later she founded the *Church of Christ, Scientist* in Boston, Massachusetts. The church grew quickly and reached its peak membership in the early 1970's. But because of controversies, financial mismanagement, and the failure of its now elderly members to attract younger people, the membership shrunk to about 150,000 today.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

Christian Science is a strange, often contradictory and – for the outsider – confusing system that mixes Hindu beliefs with Christian terminology and is based on two fundamental principles, which are "*God is All-in-All*" and "*God, Spirit, being all means nothing is matter*". This, according to Mrs. Eddy, is the cardinal point in Christian Science: matter and evil – including sin, disease, and death – are *unreal*.

In other words, the spiritual world is all there is. Matter is only an illusion and so is sin, sickness, death. The only problem of mankind is the false belief that these things really exist. Christ came to set us free from these false beliefs by his teaching and example and by understanding his teachings correctly we can be truly healed.

It is quite obvious that these foundations of *Christian Science* can hardly be called "*Christian*". The Bible clearly states that God is a personal being who *made the world and all things therein* (**Acts 17:24**). Although God is *omnipresent* he is not a pantheistic "*All-in-All*" but distinct from his creation. Matter is not an illusion, but was created by God and pronounced "*good*" (**Genesis 1:31**). Sin, sickness, and death are real as well. They came into the world because of man's willful choice to rebel against God (**Romans 3:23, 5:12-14**).

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

Since the Bible is so clear about these issues, how can a church who claims to be based on the Word of God hold on to such unbiblical principles? Let us take a closer look at the true sources of authority in *Christian Science*.

According to Mary Baker Eddy, Christian Scientists "*take the inspired Word of the Bible as their sufficient guide to eternal life*". But as in so many other seemingly Christian cults, the Bible is made subject to interpretation and explanation. The Bible as we have it, they say, is unreliable.

The thirty thousand different readings in the old Testament, and the three hundred thousand in the New, these facts show how a mortal and material sense

stole into the divine record.

Students who strictly adhere to the right, and make the Bible and Science and Health a study, are in no danger of mistaking their way.

So the book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* is considered necessary for a proper understanding of the scripture. It contains the true knowledge a Christian should have and *“neither pen nor tongue can overthrow it”*. So, the source of authority for the Christian Scientist are the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, and not the Bible.

This becomes quite obvious when we consider the fundamental “truths” taught by *The Church of Christ, Scientist*. The two principles *God is All-in-All* and *matter and evil are unreal* must ever be in mind. All subsequent study *must* relate to these absolutes. Although they are in clear conflict with the Word of God that we find in the Bible, a Christian Scientist is not to dispute them.

God

We acknowledge and adore one supreme and infinite God. We acknowledge His Son, one Christ; the Holy Ghost or divine Comforter; and man in God's image and likeness.

That sounds quite orthodox. But this statement has to be read in the context of the principle *God is All-in-All*. *Christian Science* emphasizes over and over again that God is all that *really* is. Whatever is not God, is unreal, nonexistent, and the result of “mortal error”. *Christian Science* demands that men give up their “false” beliefs that there are other realities or individual beings separate from God.

In her writings, Mrs. Eddy oscillates between a personal and an impersonal view of God. *“God is individual and personal ... in a scientific sense, but not in any anthropomorphic sense”*. She does not care to explain what the scientific sense should be. God sees, hears, and knows, but he is also *“the divine principle of all being, the ever-present I AM that fills all space, including mankind”*.

So the concept of God is a very hazy one. But it is clear that it is not one of God the Creator who has a loving interest in his creation. The trinity is also openly denied:

The theory of the three persons in one God suggests polytheism, rather than one ever-present I AM. Life, Truth, Love constitute the triune Person called God. They represent a trinity in unity, three in one, the same in essence, though multiform in office: God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter.

In other words, because God is All-in-All, he cannot be three persons. So, although she denies it, Mrs. Eddy clearly teaches the Pantheism that we find in the Hindu scriptures. It is no wonder, that her doctrines about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are far from orthodox.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the human man, and Christ is the divine idea; hence the duality of Jesus the Christ. The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as the material manhood, was not Christ.

We acknowledge Jesus' atonement as the evidence of divine, efficacious Love, unfolding man's unity with God through Christ.

Christian Scientists have a very peculiar explanation for Jesus Christ being God and man at the same time. They simply say, that we have to distinguish between Jesus, the man, and the divine Christ. For them, Jesus was *not* the Christ but only the man, who *demonstrated* the Christ, that is the divine idea of salvation from evil. ``*Jesus was not one with the father – only the spiritual idea, the Christ, dwells forever in the bosom of the father*’’. Actually, at this point Mrs. Eddy’s teachings mix Hinduism and Gnosticism and thus become somewhat confusing. She claims that God is all-in-all and that nothing material exists, but at the same time she writes about Jesus as if he were a corporeal, material being and that he has to be distinguished from the divine idea, which – as we were just told – is all there is.

However, later on she writes, that Jesus was not born physically, because matter is just an illusion, and that Mary’s conception was purely spiritual. For the same reason, Jesus’ death on the cross – like all death – was an illusion. He was alive in the tomb and his resurrection was just the ``*spiritualization of a higher idea of immortality*’’. By this and by his healing miracles, Jesus thus showed the way into truth, life, and love.

We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter.

So the whole purpose of Jesus’ coming to earth was to demonstrate that the power of the spirit overrules material sense, which, according to *Christian Science* is all we need to understand to get ``saved’’.

It is clear that these teachings have nothing to do with the Jesus Christ of the Bible. His birth, life, death, and resurrection, his person and his atonement – it all has been twisted beyond recognition. The Bible is very clear about Jesus Christ being fully God and Man at the same time.

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Says **Colossians 2:9**. **John 14:6** points out that Jesus is the only way to God *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* **John 1:1-3,14** and **Philippians 2:6-7** also show that Mrs. Eddy's teachings about Jesus Christ have nothing to do with the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit

This Science of God and man is the Holy Ghost, which reveals and sustains the unbroken and eternal harmony of both God and the universe.

For the *Christian Scientist*, the Holy Spirit is just the unfolding of the thoughts and mind of God, the *Divine Science*, but by no means a person on its own.

Man

Given the principle that matter is unreal, how does one have to understand creation and the fact that man was created in God's image? What is man? *Christian Science* gives the following explanation.

There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All in all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is moral error. Spirit is real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal. Spirit is God, and man is his image and likeness. Therefore, man is not material, but is spiritual.

According to Mrs. Eddy, man – being made in the image of God – is entirely spiritual, the reflection of God or Mind – perfect and eternal. In the view of this, man is incapable of sin, sickness, and death. The only problem of mankind is that we believe in the *illusion* of individuality – which is in strong opposition to the principle *God is All-in-All*. Since the concept of an individual soul is an illusion, sickness and death must be an illusion as well. After all, we reflect God and God cannot be sick. If we realize this truth, we shall be healed. This is how **John 8:32** is understood:

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

It is this approach to healing diseases that made *Christian Science* attractive to many people. As a matter of fact, the idea is not entirely wrong. We know that there are quite a few diseases where your attitude and desire to get well plays a major role in the healing process. Placebos, for instance, are proven to work well in some cases, which shows that there is in fact a process of inner healing, even

if the disease is of physical nature. But that does not mean that the disease did not exist in the first place.

Furthermore, we do not live in a purely imaginary world like in a big computer simulation. Matter is real and was created distinct from God, who pronounced it ``good'' (**Genesis 1:31**). Sin, sickness, and death is not an illusion but the result of man's rebellion (**Genesis 3:22-23**) and certainly real.

The sad consequence of this false teaching is that true *Christian Scientists* never consult a doctor. There have been numerous lawsuits against parents who allowed their children to die by neglecting medical treatment in favor of ``spiritual healing'', which raised the question to what extent the government has the duty to interfere with one's right to exercise religious beliefs in order to protect minors from serious damage.

Salvation

Since for the *Christian Scientist* sin is just an illusion, the term *salvation* gets an entirely different meaning. After all, we are not responsible for any trespass against God, Satan does not exist as well – so who is to be saved from what?

We acknowledge God's forgiveness of sin in the destruction of sin and the spiritual understanding that casts out evil as unreal. But the belief in sin is punished so long as the belief lasts.

So God has already destroyed sin but we still need to realize that our belief in sin is a mortal error. As long as we believe in sin, we will suffer the consequences. So salvation does not come through faith in Jesus Christ but by understanding the truth.

Final deliverance from error, is not reached ... by pinning one's faith without works to another's vicarious effort.

In Christian Science it is plain that God removes the punishment for sin only as sin is removed ... hence the hope of universal salvation. ...To lose the sense of sin we must first detect the claim of sin; hold it invalid ... sin disappears, and its unreality is proven.

This more or less says it all. Jesus came only to destroy the belief in sin. His death on the cross and his resurrect was only meant to open our eyes for the truth. But putting our faith in Christ is *not* the way to get saved. We must make sin disappear by proving that it does not exist. Only then we will be free of its consequences.

From a Christian perspective, this whole concept of salvation in *Christian Science* simply does not make any sense but rather looks like a futile attempt to use Christian terminology as cover for doctrines that rather look like Hinduism

and have nothing to do with the Bible. **1. John 1:8** and **Ephesians 2:8-9** make this very clear.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Things to come

Eschatology has little place in *Christian Science*, since heaven and hell are not real places. Heaven is the state of harmony, the reign of the Spirit. Hell is just a mortal belief, suffering and self-destruction, self-imposed agony, a great error. The fires of hell will be a bitter reality for those who have been taught that it does not exist.

Since there is no physical death there can also be no bodily resurrection. We simply exist eternally. Death is just the means to get into another phase of our life with the chance to make progress by understanding that material life is just an illusion. The concept of a final judgment is denied. Universal salvation rests on progression and probation until one is free from false beliefs.

Summary

Although the *Church of Christ, Scientist* claims to be the only true Christian Church, it is impossible to view it as biblical Christianity. There is not a single facet of the Word of God that has not been distorted or denied. *Christian Science* is so foreign to the Bible that – if it didn't use words like Jesus, Love, Grace, Sin, Christian, etc. – you would never suspect it had anything to do with the Word of God at all. In fact, it is a Hindu philosophy, with its teaching of truth-realization, absorption into the infinite, and freedom from the bondage of illusion and ignorance, which has found a revival under a new name, *Christian Science*, which is more acceptable to the Western World.

17. Scientology

The Church of Scientology is a very controversial religion founded by science fiction author L. Ron Hubbard in Washington, D.C. in 1954. According to its own definition it *Scientology* is an *applied religious philosophy* that aims at exploring the *Terra Incognita* of the human mind in order to “clear” the soul of its negative energies. It is an outgrowth of Hubbard's earlier psychological theories of *Dianetics*, documented in his 1948 book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, which offer an alternative path to overcoming physical and mental

stress. *Dianetics* means “pertaining to reasoning” and expresses that the reasoning of man should be used to rectify his past and to determine his future.

As an advance over his theory of *Dianetics*, Hubbard later elaborated a theory attributing mental aberrations to *engrams*, that is prenatal impressions accumulated by the soul during past lives. Mixing ideas from Buddhist and Hindu religious philosophy, science fiction, and 20th-century Western concepts in psychology and science, Hubbard produced a religion that sees all human beings as immortal spirits, so-called *Thetans*, who have forgotten their identity and became deceived by the very universe they mentally emanated in order to amuse themselves. *Scientology* claims it can free the Thetan to realize his or her true nature and powers through an expensive therapy called *processing* that neutralizes the engrams and thus heals the mind. *Scientology* claims to be the fastest growing religion with more than 15 million members in 65 countries. While it is not clear whether these numbers are exaggerated or not, *Scientology*, whose headquarters are now in Los Angeles, is certainly one of the wealthiest new religions with a lot of support. Celebrities such as Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and Sonny Bono are only a few of the Hollywood faithful who actively endorse *Scientology*. In contrast to most cults, *Scientology* has not been weakened after the death of its founder in 1986, but has become very powerful in recent years.

But *Scientology* also has been criticized right from its beginnings. The method of *Scientology* was challenged by the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association already during the 1950s. In the 1960s, the governments of England, Australia, and the United States opened investigations into church activities, particularly for suspected practices of tax evasion. Since the early 1970 charges have been brought up against *the Church of Scientology* for psychological coercion of followers and organized smear campaigns orchestrated against critics of the church. In its September 1981 issue, *Reader's Digest* even went so far to describe *Scientology* as a *multi-national racket masquerading as religion*. Most European governments do not recognize the religious status of *Scientology*, largely because of many court decisions that found *Scientology* to be a business rather than a religion. Some of them, like Belgium and Germany go even further and classify *Scientology* as a dangerous cult that needs to be observed by the government.

Thus, over the years, *Scientology* has become an extremely dangerous cult not so much because of its religious teachings but because of its almost criminal practices. For us, this may not be the main issue but you can't really talk about *Scientology* without mentioning its “non-religious” practices.

It is interesting to notice that *Scientology* draws its members mostly from the Christian-educated middle class. The *Church of Scientology* claims that its beliefs are not incompatible with the Christian faith and many people seem to get into *Scientology* because they initially view it as unusual, but successful self-

improvement technique that does not affect their religious beliefs. However, an evaluation of what *Scientology* teaches in the areas of God, man, creation, salvation, and death proves that *Scientology* is inconsistent with the beliefs of orthodox Christian faith.

Major Doctrines – where are the differences?

Despite its use of quasi-religious vocabulary *Scientology* does not really have anything that could be called a theology. Critics suspect that clerical terms like *spiritual*, *God*, and *church* mainly serve the purpose of tax evasion. *Scientology's* concept of God is vague and it does not say anything about Jesus, the Holy Spirit, sin, or salvation. Worship is totally unknown to *Scientology*. *Scientology* has its rituals for marriage, christening, and funerals. None of these rituals, however, include prayer or any reference to God. As a matter of fact, *Scientology* has distinguished teachings about man and his soul, previous existences, prenatal influences, and future lives that clearly show the influence of Eastern mysticism.

Scientology divides the human mind into two components – the *analytic* and the *reactive* mind. Experiences of extreme shock, pain, or unconsciousness cause *engrams*, or sensory impressions, to be recorded in the reactive mind. These mental pictures are, in turn, the cause of our emotional and even many physical problems today. They lay dormant in the brain until re-stimulated by a similar incident. When re-stimulated, they cause conditioned, stimulus-response behavior which is counterproductive to one's well-being. *Scientology* believes this re-stimulation is fairly automatic. In other words, we are not free beings: we are slaves of an *aberrated* reactive mind.

Scientology teaches that through therapy, we can be directly exposed to our engrams, erase them, and become *clear*, that is in control of our behavior. Unfortunately, however, we have all been accumulating engrams for trillions of years, which makes the procedure more complicated and this is why one can only become clear through the method of *Scientology*.

According to *Scientology*, each person is really a *Thetan*, an immortal spirit that has existed since all of eternity. Thetans have absolute control over their bodies, but, sadly, they think they are bodies and hence are bound by the MEST (matter, energy, space, time) universe. Each time a body dies, the Thetan must enter another body, but this brings with it all its trillions of years' accumulation of engrams. Thetans thus are no longer free, but are in bondage to the material universe.

Scientology claims it can resolve all hidden engrams by helping people to re-experience the damaging events of this life and of the past lives as well. The initiate may eventually achieve a state of *clear* and then, by progressing through

numerous levels of *Operating Thetan (OT)*, increasingly achieve self-realization and resume his initial powers.

Sources of Authority – anything but the Bible?

Scientology does not have a source of authority that is open for everybody to review. The Bible certainly does not play any role in *Scientology*. Hubbard's book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* may be considered as one of the foundations of *Scientology* but it does not give a clear picture of *Scientology's* teachings.

The true source of authority for the Scientologists are the many courses and auditing services offered by the *Church of Scientology*. These courses are protected by copyrights, which according to *Scientology* is necessary to avoid that people work with material for which they are not yet spiritually mature enough. The true reason is, of course, to keep people from going over the material without paying the horrendous prices (\$5,600.- per course) and to prevent them from analyzing its teachings before they are already committed. Nevertheless much of the material has leaked into the public through former members, which subsequently were dragged into copyright lawsuits and now publish the material on their web-sites with a lot of legal disclaimers.

God

Scientology's concept of God is vague. What the church refers to as *the Supreme Being* is purposely left undefined and not particularly relevant in *Scientology* theory or practice. It is variously implied to be, or referred to as, *Nature, Infinity, the Eighth Dynamic, all Theta*, and so forth. Usually the individual Scientologist is free to interpret God in whatever manner he or she wishes, which shall avoid that prospective followers will see any conflicts with their own religion.

A closer look, however, reveals that *Scientology* teaches the existence of a multitude of *Thetans* who collectively could be said to comprise the Supreme Being. According to *Scientology* these Thetans were the ones who created the universe trillions of years ago, because they got bored and needed something to play in and amuse themselves. To be precise, they emanated *mental* universes. So the universe as we see it is merely an agreed-upon reality, just a game or illusion – but not an actual reality.

So *Scientology* is fundamentally pantheistic and in sharp contradiction to the biblical teaching that there is only one sovereign and perfect Creator God from all eternity – without beginning or end, immutable, who exists in three Persons, and is infinitely holy, just, and loving (see e.g., **Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 43:10-11, 61:8; Malachi 3:6; Acts 5:3-4; 1. Timothy 2:5; Titus 2:13; 1. John 4:8-10**). *Scientology's* teachings leave no space for God, since this would render their costly therapies superfluous.

Jesus Christ & The Holy Spirit

Scientology does not have any specific teachings about Jesus Christ or The Holy Spirit. Hubbard rejected Christ's deity and mission as figments of unenlightened minds.

Neither Lord Buddha nor Jesus Christ were Operating Thetans according to evidence. They were just a shade above clear.

So, for Hubbard, Jesus is just average, equal to the many thousand Scientologists who reach the lower spiritual levels of *Scientology* and the highest levels produced by *Scientology's* technique are far superior to Jesus Christ.

Man

Scientology's doctrine about man is the one supporting pillar upon which everything else rests. Every important teaching in *Scientology* is predicated on the existence of Thetans and the status Hubbard has given them.

Scientology maintains that in his true nature, man is not the limited and pitiful body and ego he mistakenly imagines himself to be. He is a Thetan, a spiritual and immortal being whose fundamental nature is basically *good and divine*. He is *not morally fallen*; rather he is simply ignorant of his own perfection. His only "Fall" was into matter, not into sin, which does not exist.

How did this Fall come about?

Apparently, trillions of years ago Thetans became bored, so they emanated mental universes to play in and amuse themselves. Soon, however, they became more and more entranced in their own creation until they lost all awareness of their true identity and spiritual nature. They became hypnotized and trapped by matter, energy, space, time. Adding to the problem was the accumulation of endless *engrams*, that is mental pictures of extreme experiences, throughout trillions of years of existence. The final result was a pitiful creature – a materially enslaved entity existing as a mere stimulus-response machine. Today only slavery to the reactive mind and bondage to the the physical body and environment are what remain of once glorious spiritual beings.

Thus, the *person* in *Scientology* is a a spiritual being of infinite creative potential who acts in, but *is not part of*, the physical universe. He is the innate source of his own projected universe, which overlaps the created universes of other Thetans in a great community of souls. Death is endlessly repeatable through reincarnation and is hence almost inconsequential. Death, however, is at least potentially beneficial in that it may permit the release of the soul from the prison of the body.

This teaching strongly resembles the concept of the *Atman* in Hinduism. As in Hinduism, man is considered a deity who has forgotten he is divine. Like Hinduism, *Scientology* aims at helping man to overcome the past and find his way back into the Infinite, the One Reality. However, it seeks to shortcut the law of *Karma*, the age-long process of balancing previous lives, by neutralizing the original wrong. This method takes much less time and is much less demanding than the ancient methods of ascetism and meditation – but it costs more and is more damaging to the human mind.

The Bible clearly rejects the idea that man is an ignorant god who needs only enlightenment or self-realization. There is only one eternal God in the universe (Isaiah 43:10-11) who created man (body and spirit) as a *finite* creature at a point in time (**Genesis 2:7**). Hence it is impossible that divine beings such as *Scientology's* Thetans can exist. Man's problems do not result from engrams or boredom, but from sin and self-centeredness (**Romans 3:10-18; Ephesians 2:1-3**). Death is a one-time event that leads to an irreversible fate for both the saved and the lost and thus human beings have one lifetime only to make their peace with God (**Matthew 25:46; Luke 26:19-31; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:10-15**).

Biblically then, *Scientology's* philosophy, techniques, solutions to problems, and final goals are based upon underlying presuppositions that are inherently incorrect.

Sin & Salvation

In his book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* Hubbard writes that his philosophy “is not interested in saving man, but it can do much to prevent him from being saved.” Since there is no sin, and evil is only the outcome of engrams, mankind does not need an atonement for sin, but a therapy that neutralizes the engrams. This therapy is only offered by *the Church of Scientology*. In other words, salvation is in Ron Hubbard alone. However, it is not faith that is required, but a procedure called *auditing*, which guides the seeker, or the *pre-clear*, through increasing stages of self-awareness first to a state of being *clear* from engrams.

It all begins with a free *Personality Test* (now even offered on the Web), probably the most famous *Scientology* sales tool. It consists of about 200 questions that shall help the pre-clear to identify the source of his difficulties. Not surprisingly, the test *always* identifies one or another character flaw that *Scientology* can cure. So those who evaluate the test for you will advise you to take some *Scientology* courses to improve your communication skills or similar.

Scientology processing is offered in blocks of 12.5 hours, known as intensives, and involves both *auditing* and *courses*. *Scientology* claims that auditing is similar to Catholic confession. A *pre-clear* meets with an *auditor* in a private counseling session. The auditor shall direct the seeker back along his personal track to contract and relive the moments of emotion, pain, and unconscious thought that were recorded in the reactive mind. He probes back through previous lives and, if necessary, to the basic event that started the chain of damaging engrams and prohibits self-realization. For this purpose he uses an Electro-psychometer, briefly *E-meter*, that operates like a crude lie detector and shall reveal the engrams while the pre-clear answers the auditor's questions. When the engrams are revealed and presumably confessed, then – according to *Scientology* teaching – they are automatically erased and cannot harass the Thetan any longer. This procedure continues until all engrams are erased and the seeker is pronounced *clear*. It should be noticed, however, that *Scientology* keeps records of all the personal secrets revealed during the process and often makes use of that information in case of defection.

The status of a clear, which is reached by thousands of scientologists, however, marks only the beginning of *Scientology* processing. Further course now guide the clear through numerous levels of “*Operating Thetan*” back to the original Thetan abilities that he once had. The first OT levels increase the Thetan's awareness by sharpening his powers of observation. OT III contains the “*creation story*” of *Scientology* and the bizarre story of an evil galactic space tyrant named *Xenu*, who 75 million years ago brought the Thetans to Earth and turned them into the pitiful, materially enslaved creature that now has to exist as a mere stimulus-response machine. The higher OT levels are primarily aimed at re-attaining our previous God-like state. At these levels you have to pass security checks and are required to renounce your previous faith. A former OT VII member has sworn an affidavit regarding how *Scientology* attempted to forcibly de-program his belief in Christianity.

After level OT VIII, which is reached only by very few scientologists, you can take Life Orientation courses in order to be admitted to level OT IX and OT X. These two levels will not be released until all organizations worldwide have reached a certain size, which means that you have to go out and make new scientologists.

The *Church of Scientology* is absolutely rabid about protecting the secrecy of its higher OT levels through copyright and trade secret law. Nevertheless, some material has leaked into the public through former members or discussions in the internet newsgroups (e.g. alt.religion.scientology). Since the material is constantly reworked, it is somewhat difficult to analyze what is actually been taught at these levels.

However, it is quite obvious that the teachings are in sharp contrast to biblical Christianity. Salvation is a free gift. One is redeemed from sin on the principle of grace, simply through faith in Christ's atonement (**John 6:47; Ephesians 2:8-9;**

Hebrews 11:1; 1. John 2:2) and it does not require special knowledge (*Scientology* courses) or works (*Scientology* auditing etc.) to arrive at spiritual salvation.

It should be noted, that *Scientology* processing comes at a horrendous price. The first courses are cheap in order to lure people into becoming members of the cult. But once you are in, the prices go sky high. According to a detailed list of all the courses you have to take, one has to pay \$365,000 in order to advance through OT VIII – and this assumes that you have to take each course only once. At these rates, only the idle rich can afford spiritual salvation, while in Christianity it is for free.

Things to come

Scientology does not have any specific teachings about future events. It teaches that we will eventually receive back all of our original Thetan powers and in a ways become one with the “all Theta”, but it does not describe and specific events that will take place in the process. There is no concept of heaven or hell as in Christianity.

Summary

One may observe that *Scientology* does entertain a fine goal in attempting to improve the world and man’s lot within it, whether materially or spiritually. This is what makes it so attractive for some people in the beginning, particularly because it claims to be compatible with the Christian faith. Many practitioners are dedicated and selfless in seeking such ends. Nevertheless, each Scientologist must weigh the scales of his or her own conscience to determine the best manner in which to achieve such goals. If man is not a Thetan as *Scientology* claims, but a fallen being in need of redemption as Christianity teaches, what will have been the fruit of a lifetime of work?

For the Christian, it is quite obvious that *Scientology* is not just a self-improvement technique that is compatible with the Christian faith. Christianity is based on our faith in God the Creator, Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit. *Scientology* is a mixture of Science Fiction, Hinduism, and modern philosophy that denies every aspect of the Christian faith and is in no way compatible with it. Scientologists must eventually renounce their Christian faith to reach *Scientology’s* highest levels. *Scientology* knowingly lies to low-level Scientologists about this fact.

But even from the scientific, psychological viewpoint *Scientology* is more than questionable. Hubbard always claimed that *Scientology* is a proven science that is rational and utilizes scientific principles. But Hubbard has no scientific background and his research methodology is unreliable. In fact, his own son claims that for his bestseller *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health* he

did no research at all. He just took bits and pieces from other people, put them together, and mixed in a lot of fantasy. Furthermore, researchers who have examined the *E-meter*, the only “scientific” instrument in *Scientology* allegedly capable of producing data, have concluded that none of the *Scientology* theories associated with it are in any way justified.

Given these facts one might assume that *Scientology* draws its members only from among the simple minded and non-religious people. But polls have shown that 47% of the scientologists claim to be Christians who still practice their faith, and 80% are middle class or higher, often with college education. The Christian church has not yet recognized the risk *Scientology* poses to its own members who do not recognize that being a Scientologist is inconsistent with the Christian faith. But you cannot serve God and participate in *Scientology* at the same time.

Special Aspects

Religious deception and false teachings are not the only dangers of the *Church of Scientology*. Even from a worldly perspective it has to be considered one of the most most dangerous and ruthless cults, which has little to do with a religion as one would usually understand this. Some critics went even so far to call it *multi-national racket masquerading as religion*. One cannot really talk about *Scientology* without discussing these non-religious aspects.

A business under the Cover of Religion

The question whether *Scientology* is a religion or not has been disputed since the founding of the so-called *Church of Scientology*. Ron Hubbard is widely rumored to have said *The way to make a million dollars is to start a religion* and the results have proven him right.

Until 1993, the Internal Revenue Service – like almost all European countries – has denied *Scientology* tax-exempt status as a charitable organization, because it was dubious about the fact that a small religious enterprise could make more than 100 million dollars per year and that 90% of this money came from *fees*, not from donations. *Where* the money goes, was also controversial. When Hubbard was alive, he was reported to have received 10% of all the fees collected by *Scientology* centers and to have deposited as much as a \$500 million in Swiss bank accounts.

The sudden and secret 1993 capitulation to *Scientology* by the IRS provoked bewildered suspicion for many, especially in view of the history of litigation between the two parties. After a legal challenge by *Scientology*, a 1984 U.S. tax court decision upheld the IRS. The court found that *Scientology's* continued operation was for a substantial commercial purpose, and it was “founded for the

primary purpose of gaining tax-exempt status to serve the financial goals of other, non-exempt entities". The decision was upheld by the U.S. Appeals Court, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to consider it only one year before the IRS reversal.

The 1993 IRS decision to grant *Scientology* tax exempt status in spite of all this evidence of criminal activity by the church remains a mystery – a mystery deepened by its decision to seal the negotiation and any record of the agreement. But Tax Analysts, a taxpayer lobby, filed a lawsuit to force disclosure, which surfaced some amazing information.

In the early 1990's *Scientology* undertook investigations and inquiries into the lives of IRS employees, and engaged in public relations campaigns against the IRS. In 1993, *Scientology* leader David Miscavage and fellow Scientologist Marty Rathburn, just dropped in at the IRS headquarters, with no appointment, and were allowed to see the head of the IRS, Commissioner Fred Goldberg. After that meeting Mr. Goldberg created a special committee to negotiate a settlement with *Scientology* outside normal agency procedures.

According to Tax Analysts, the specialists who were to review *Scientology's* new application for tax exemption were instructed by the negotiations committee they were to verify only that the correct forms were all completed properly. They were not to evaluate whether the information submitted on the forms actually qualified *Scientology* to tax exemption as a religious organization. It appears that decision had already been made by the negotiating committee before the final forms were ever submitted.

Abuse of Followers and Harassment of Critics

Scientology is not a *turn-the-other-cheek* religion. Quite the contrary, it follows the directive that anything is permissible which advances the goals of *Scientology*. Statements such as "*Never fear to hurt another in a just cause*" and "*To punish to the fullest extent of my power anyone misusing or degrading Scientology to harmful ends*" characterize the ethics of *Scientology*. This makes it the antithesis of Christianity, which follows Paul's guidelines in **Romans 8:32**:

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Scientology has a long and well-documented history of

- using deception to recruit people into taking a multitude of expensive "counseling" courses in order to be rid of "aberrations" from present and past lives, which cost them between \$200,000 and \$400,000 over their lifetime.

- subjecting followers to involuntary servitude, hard labor in “rehabilitation” camps.
- applying processing techniques that harm the mental health of its followers and result in hallucinations and irrational behavior, severe disorientation, strange bodily sensations, physical and mental illness, unconsciousness, and suicide.

A great number of *Scientology* associated suicides or attempted suicides is documented on various websites.

- psychological coercion of followers, resulting in losses of marriages, family relationships, possessions, sanity, and life.
- attempting to forcibly de-program a member’s belief in Christianity during security checks for higher OT levels.
- holding people against their will unless they comply with more *Scientology* processing, and telling them that they would commit suicide or harm their children if they didn’t take more expensive Scientology courses.
- keeping records of a member’s personal secrets revealed during the auditing process and using this material for blackmail purposes in case of defection.

But *Scientology* does not stop at abusing its followers. It also has a “fair game” policy of subjecting critics, former and defecting members to slander, harassment, intimidation, and lawsuits.

- A 1977 FBI raid on *Scientology* headquarters produced comprehensive evidence of stolen government documents, spies planted in the IRS and Justice Department, planted bugging devices, and 48,000 documents detailing smear campaigns orchestrated against critics of the church.

Scientology has plotted to destroy enemies by framing them for bomb threats, hit-and-run accidents, and other crimes.

- One of the attacks uncovered was carried out against Paulette Cooper, author of the 1972 book, *The Scandal of Scientology*. Scientologists smeared Cooper’s reputation, then framed her for a felony. Using stationary she had touched, which therefore contained her fingerprints, they forged a bomb threat against the Church.
- Another “attack and destroy” campaign uncovered by the FBI was carried out against the then mayor of Clearwater, Florida, Gabe Cazares. Documents revealed that “*Scientology* agents staged a fake hit-and-run accident” against Cazares and later tricked him into using the services of an undercover Scientologist as attorney in a lawsuit against Scientology. From this undercover position the attorney provided inside information to Scientology, and gained access to sensitive files in the State Attorney

General's office, "which was conducting an investigation of the local *Scientology* organization".

- In 1986, Larry Wollersheim won a \$30 million jury verdict in compensatory and punitive damages against the *Church of Scientology*. The courts found that *Scientology* was guilty of intentional and negligent infliction of severe emotional harm. They wrote "*The policy of fair game, by its nature, was intended to punish the person who dared to leave the Church. Here, the church actively encouraged its members to destroy Wollersheim's business. Further, by physically restraining Wollersheim from leaving the Church's ship, and subjecting him to further auditing despite his protests, the Church ignored Wollersheim's emotional state and callously compelled him to continue in a practice known to cause him emotional distress.*"
- The British biographer Russell Miller, who wrote a quite revealing book, *Bare Faced Messiah: The True Story of L. Ron Hubbard*, was sued by *Scientology* in Great Britain and the United States. *Scientology* also hired their chief "private investigator", Eugene Ingram, to discredit him. Miller soon found himself being questioned by the police as a suspect for a murder because of an anonymous tip-off from someone who used an extensive knowledge of Miller's work and private life to try to frame him. (Sunday Times, October 25, 1987)
- In 1992 the Church of *Scientology* and three of its members were found guilty of breach of trust for conducting espionage against the Canadian government – the first time in Canada that a church had been found guilty of criminal activity. The church was also found guilty of libel against the Canadian prosecuting attorney.
- In 1996 David Mayo, also a former Scientologist, won a long legal battle against *the Church of Scientology* in the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. The court stated that the Church had been playing "fast and loose with the legal system" by filing countless frivolous motions, employing "evasions, misrepresentations, broken promises and lies, destruction and concealment of documents". Actually, *Scientology* spends about 30% of its money on lawsuits, trying every legal and illegal trick to prolong the case. Although it is almost certain that they eventually lose the case in court, it is their policy to make life for former members and critics as miserable as possible. Many ask what kind of a religion it is that spends so much money harassing its enemies.
- In 1995, the 36 year old Lisa McPherson died while in the "care" of *Scientology* at the headquarter in Clearwater, Florida.

Lisa had been a member of the *Church of Scientology* for 18 years, but became disillusioned and wanted to get out. That's when church members say she began to act strangely. On November 18, 1995, Lisa was involved in a minor car accident. She was apparently not hurt, but she got out of her car and seemed mentally unstable. She was taken to a hospital where she was physically evaluated as being unharmed, but the hospital wanted

her to be psychologically cared for. However, some Scientologists arrived and stated that Lisa did not believe in psychiatry, and she checked out after a short evaluation. *Scientology* staff promised that she would be cared for 24 hours a day. Lisa was then taken to nearby *Scientology* headquarters, the Ft. Harrison Hotel for "rest and relaxation".

On December 5, 1995, however, Lisa McPherson was dead on arrival at a hospital 20 miles north of Clearwater. According to the coroner's report, Lisa was underweight, severely dehydrated, and had bruises (from ropes?) and bug bites.

McPherson's family filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against the church in 1997, alleging she was held against her will. State Attorney Bernie McCabe charged the church with felony counts of abuse and neglect of a disabled adult, and unauthorized practice of medicine. The trial will be held next year.

- The *Watchman Expositor* has on file many published accounts of intense harassment and abuse of former members, media reporters, television companies, newspapers and magazines, lawyers, and even trial judges who had anything to do with either criticizing or bringing *Scientology* to justice. Two articles detail the chilling accounts of consistent harassment and acts of intimidating experienced by various judges assigned to significant lawsuits against *Scientology*.

These are not just a few individual cases. *Scientology* operates a *Guardian Office* that actually trains its people for that purpose and functions essentially like a secret service organization. Not surprisingly, *Scientology* policy is to "NEVER agree to an investigation of *Scientology*". For many observers, *Scientology* is not just a somewhat aggressive religion, but *quite likely the most ruthless, the most classically terrorist, the most litigious and the most lucrative cult the country has ever seen* (Former Cult Awareness Network executive director Cynthia Kissler on *60 minutes*, December 28, 1997). Today, Reader's Digest's characterization of *Scientology* as a *multi-national racket masquerading as religion* is valid more than ever before.

A threat to Democracy (Government and Society)

There is a history of conflict between *Scientology* and the governments of several European countries, which are willing to scrutinize and restrict groups that identify themselves as religions, yet have a history of abuse or subterfuge. In Germany, which is very sensitive to totalitarian, anti-democratic organizations and movements *Scientology* is viewed by many as an actual, and potentially serious, threat to the state.

About 3 years ago the German government, I believe it is the only one in the world right now, decided to take actions against the continuing spread of *Scientology*, because it realized the danger of the growing influence that the organization already has on the community level. German officials cite the many civil and criminal convictions of *Scientology* and Scientologists around the world and *Scientology's* written policies, which institutionalize these abuses.

One such document is Hubbard's Policy Letter of August 15, 1960, titled *Department of Government Affairs*. The policy states

The object of the Department is to broaden the impact of Scientology upon governments and other organizations and is to conduct itself so as to make the name and reputation of Scientology better and more forceful. Therefore, defensive tactics are frowned upon. Only attacks resolve threats. The goal of the Department is to bring the government and hostile philosophies or societies into a state of complete compliance with the goals of Scientology. This is done by high level ability to control, to overwhelm, and introvert such agencies.

(as in the case of the IRS)

A series of court rulings against *Scientology* resulted in the German government's decision to put the *Church of Scientology* under nationwide surveillance by counter-intelligence agents, because it contends that the church is a threat to democracy.

True to their "always attack" policy, *Scientology* began to retaliate. They took out large full page ads in major U.S. and international newspapers. The ads accused the German government of returning to its Nazi past, paralleling the Nazi treatment of Jews with the current persecution of *Scientology*. *Scientology* celebrities John Travolta and Tom Cruise, and others, were used to send a highly publicized celebrity letter from the U.S. entertainment industry to the German government with the same sort of charges. The letter included the names of Dustin Hoffman, Goldie Hawn, Oliver Stone, Larry King, Gore Vidal, and 29 others. *Scientology* also used its celebrities to move the U.S. State Department to pressure the German government in its annual Human Rights Report. *Scientology* even filed a suit with the European Commission of Human Rights claiming persecution and discrimination.

Most of their efforts have backfired. The European Commission on Human Rights threw out the discrimination case. The comparisons of the treatment of Scientologists with the Jewish holocaust drew angry and loud protests from Jews in the U.S. and Germany. Who were outraged that *Scientology* would trivialize the Holocaust in this way. None of the abuses claimed by *Scientology* could be documented by the sect and the claims about the outcomes of various German court decisions are simply false.

And while Madeline Albright and the State Department did issue a mild rebuke to the German government for its actions against some individual members of *Scientology* they also issued a strong denunciation of *Scientology's* ads, calling them ``historically inaccurate and totally distasteful''.

Unfortunately, the US government keeps its eyes shut to the criminal activities of *Scientology* because it masquerades and claims immunity under our First Amendment. The German Government, however, simply refused to let a foreign government interfere with its affairs and continues the surveillance of the *Church of Scientology*.

Involvement with the Occult

It is a known fact that Ron Hubbard was active in black magic prior to writing Dianetics. Hubbard was a devout follower of *Aleister Crowley* of the Ordo Templo Orientis, a magician's sect organized in Europe in the early 20th century that very likely descended from the traditions of the Chaldean sorcerers described by the prophets Daniel and Jeremiah. Crowley also studied Egyptian magic and Egyptian sorcerers are mentioned in Exodus. It should be noted that this form of magic is not a hoax but more real than most people like to believe.

Hubbard's fascination for Crowley's magic becomes quite obvious in a recording of his 1952 Philadelphia Doctorate Course, which was held after Hubbard visited Crowley's estate and assumed the mantle of ``The Beast'', which is an alternate name for Satan. According to Hubbard's son, Hubbard assumed the throne of ``The Beast'' when Crowley died. Crowley appears to have spurned Hubbard's ``research'', where he attempted to conjure the Anti-Christ through the ``Whore of Babylon'' in a magic ritual at the Pasadena Ordo Templo Orientis.

Some observers suggest that Dianetics, and by extension *Scientology* as well, is an extension of Hubbard's black magic ``research'' of that time. *Scientology's* teaching that an Operating Thetan can manipulate the universe through his mental powers, and the employment of psychic powers and out-of-body episodes as a means for the Thetan to re-realize his or her true powers, are strong indicators for the church's acceptance of the realm of the occult. Further, Hubbard's own son goes so far as to affirm that ``*black magic is the inner core of Scientology*''. Hubbard himself allegedly confessed that a spirit entity guided him throughout his life and a number of scholarly researchers have verified the occult nature of *Scientology*.

The War on the Internet

The ``War on the Internet'' is the war between the *Church of Scientology* and Internet users who copy their documents and post them on the Internet.

The people who are copying their material and webbing it are using the huge accessibility of the world-wide web to get information out to people to warn them of the insanity and danger of *Scientology*. The hope is that if they can get this information out to the public and make it broadly known then people will be forewarned and will not join the cult. If they can starve *Scientology* of new members in this way, then the whole organization may collapse and then the existing members can be helped to return to society.

But of course the people within the cult believe only their own founder's interpretation of things so they use every means they can to stop this. Usually the method they use is harassment through lengthy and expensive legal processes. Sometimes it is physical harassment. Sometimes worse!

The people who post and host the copyrighted and confidential works of *Scientology* are risking themselves to help warn the public about the dangers of *Scientology*. They have a strong sense of public duty and care for their fellow men. They are breaking copyright laws, but they are acting out of conscience and out of love and compassion for those still in *Scientology*, in hopes that they will escape.

These notes could not have been written without the material provided by them.

Summary

Scientology is clearly a very dangerous cult. Its teachings are in sharp contrast with the Bible and its practices give rise to much concern. Although Christians with a sound biblical background will certainly not fall into the trap of *Scientology*, it poses a threat for those who think they could profit from the self-improvement techniques and thus embrace both Christianity and *Scientology*. The Bible tells us to

*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light (**Ephesians 5:11-13**). For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God (**John 3:20-21**).*

ISLAM

Islam would be considered a false religion, not a cult.

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." - John 14:6

The following is a summary of what we know of this religion.

- The one and only faith consistently revealed by God to mankind from the very beginning. Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus are all its prophets. – (How Muslims explain their religion)
- "Allah is our God, and Muhammad is His Prophet" – Statement of belief (Shahada)
- Teaching on Allah – (Muslim view)
 1. He alone is God, no Trinity
 2. No one can claim to be His son or daughter
 3. He will judge all according to how they submit to the law (Islam means submission) Gal. 2:16
 4. He chose Ishmael and his children as his chosen people
- Teaching on Allah – (Christian view)
 1. Ancient Arabian pagan religions worshipped heavenly bodies, Sabianism
 2. A black stone set in the Kaaba represented the moon god called Allah, (thus the crescent moon on Islamic flags)
 3. Muhammad destroyed all the idols in the Kaaba (360) except the one for Allah
 4. Therefore Allah is not just an Arabic name for the God of the Bible, it is an idol god.
- View of Muhammad – (Muslim view)
 1. The last and the greatest of all the prophets
 2. God (Allah) revealed the Quran (Koran) to him by appearing to him and telling him to recite
 3. Muslims believe that the Quran and the Sunnah (Muhammad's commentary on the Quran) are infallible and are the final and complete revelation of Allah.
 4. Without following these unerring divinely revealed works it is impossible for them to believe in or follow Allah.
 5. A third source is Muhammad's life. If there are any questions on how they should act they must emulate the prophet

- View of Muhammad – (Christian view)
 1. He is a false prophet who simply took the political laws which governed seventh-century Arabian tribes and literally made them the law of Allah, their God.
 2. Tested by the Scripture – I John 4:1-3
 3. He fails the test
 4. Who appeared to him with this new law and message? - II Corinthians 11:2-5,13-15

- Cultural & Political Domination
 1. Imposes Islamic law on all the people
 2. Takes over the whole government
 3. People have no choice but to follow the Islamic code
 4. Intolerance of Christianity is practiced in many Muslim countries

- The Five Pillars of Islam
 1. Affirmation: There is no God but Allah
 2. Prayer: Muslims are required to pray five times a day, kneeling and facing Mecca
 3. Almsgiving: A worthy Muslim must give 2.5 percent of his income to the poor.
 4. The Fast: Faithful Muslims fast from dawn to dusk every day during the month of Ramadan
 5. The Pilgrimage: Muslims are expected to journey to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is in the world." - I John 4:1-3

HELPING OTHERS RECOGNIZE CULTS AND RUN AWAY FROM THEM

1. One guideline is to make sure the church is not a member of the **National Council of Churches**, (N.C.C.) or the **World Council of Churches**. If it is, **run** from it.
2. If your church does **not believe** that **the whole Bible is the perfect Word of God**, **run** from it.
3. If your church does **not believe** that **Jesus Christ is God**, **run** from it.

4. If your church does **not** believe and **confess** that **Jesus is the Christ, Who came to this earth in the flesh**, as in 1 Jn 4:2,3, and 2 Jn 7, **run** from it.
5. If you go to any church that teaches "**it is the "only" way**, **run** from that church. No church saves anyone. It is faith in the name and shed blood of Jesus Christ.
6. Any church that teaches the **worship of the virgin Mary**, **run** from it.
7. Any church that teaches to **pray to dead saints**, **run** from it.
8. Any church that practices **ancestor worship**, or condones the practice of it by others, **run** from it.
9. Any church that uses **astrology** in any way, **run away fast**.
10. Any church that **prays in any name other than Jesus Christ**, **run** from it.
11. Any church that **consults the dead**, **flee** from that church.
12. Any church that **uses** any kind of **trinkets, idols, or any objects for worship**, **get away** from that church. Jesus Christ is the only way.
13. Any church that **does not believe in ONE GOD, manifested in three Persons, God the Father, and God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit**, **run** from them.
14. Any church that **does not teach the whole Bible**, get away from it. For example, some churches may preach only the Epistles, and others only the Psalms or Proverbs. Some may only teach the Old Testament; while others may only teach the four Gospels. Some may not teach the Bible at all. **Run** from all of these.
15. Some claim to be Christians, and great healings appear to take place; but the **healings are not done in the name of Jesus**, or the healings deceive people and lead them away from Jesus. **Run** from these.
16. Watch out for churches that are only **ceremonies** and for those that **do not encourage you to bring your Bible to the service**. **Run** from these, and don't look back.
17. Some churches **sing, and sing, and sing**, and there is **very little instruction from God's Word**. **Run** from these.
18. If the church **does not emphasize repentance and faith in Jesus Christ**, **leave** that church.
19. **Leave** any church where the teaching relies on the Bible + the teaching of some so-called prophet, or **relies on the Bible plus some other book**.
20. Any church that claims **their leader is infallible**, **get away** from it.
21. Any church that does **not believe in a literal hell**, the Great White Throne Judgment for unbelievers and the second death (that is the lake of fire), **get away** from it.
22. **Beware** of churches that **speak evil of government or those in authority**. The Bible clearly warns against these.

23. Beware of any churches that are used as **political arenas**. **Get away** from them.
24. Beware of any church whose leader is living in **fornication, adultery or has more than one wife**. **Flee** from that church. In some countries, perhaps as much as 80% of the "so-called" Christian preachers are not married, but are simply living with someone according to tribal or national traditions.
25. **Beware** of any preacher that has **an attitude of "I am great. I have many churches. I am something special. I am the secretary or treasurer" or whatever**. This is not the attitude of Christ. This does not display the fruits of the Spirit or a repentant, humble attitude. A person that is close to God should have an attitude of humility, brokenness, and meekness. The attitude we should have is to be a **SERVANT OF ALL**-Mk 9:35. Mt 20:27-AND WHOSOEVER WILL BE CHIEF AMONG YOU, LET HIM BE YOUR SERVANT. Ja 4:6-WHEREFORE HE SAITH, GOD RESISTETH THE PROUD, BUT GIVETH GRACE UNTO THE HUMBLE.
26. Beware of any church whose **leader claims to be an apostle or some great prophet of God**. This is not the attitude of humility, meekness, and the fruits you are to follow. Mt 24, Lk 21, Mk 13, and Jeremiah all show clearly that **in this age there are many false prophets**. If you know and understand the Scriptures, then you know these things are true.
27. There are some good, born-again preachers and many that are not born-again that don't believe the Rapture comes before the Tribulation. If they do not believe the Rapture will take place at all, **run** from it.
28. Water baptism is to be done only after a person repents and believes in Jesus Christ as their only hope of salvation. When it is done, it is to be done in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. If you go to a church that baptizes in another name, **leave**.
29. Warning: if your preacher **does not believe in teaching Bible prophecy, the Revelation, that Jesus Christ will soon return, and that we are to watch and be ready, run** from that church. Something is not right there.
30. Beware of any preacher that does not love the brethren, but has a **contentious and accusing attitude** toward true born-again men of God. This is not to be confused with the legitimate exposing of doctrinal error or exposing serious hidden sin within the body of Christ.

OCCULTISM IN OUR TIMES

"...In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;" - I Tim. 4:1

- It is estimated that 50 to 60 million Americans are involved to some degree in the occult.
- One major area of the occult is Mantic Behavior which includes, astrology, tarot cards, palmistry, numerology, crystal balls, channeling, and other psychic phenomena.
- Black and White Magic is a second area of the occult. White Magic is also known as wicca or white witchcraft, which teaches that there is a universal power source to tap into that can be used for good. Black Magic teaches that there are both good and bad sources of power. Examples of both types are in the form of witches, sorcerers and such as prevalent in today's society and are becoming more and more acceptable.
- Satanism is the third area of the occult. This is a worship and allegiance to Satan.

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer." - Deut. 18:10-11

THE OCCULT – ANCIENT PRACTICES HAVING A MODERN TWIST

The *New Age Movement* is a growing belief system in North America encompassing thousands of autonomous - and sometimes contradictory - beliefs, organizations and events. It blends the theology of pantheistic Eastern religions with practices from Western occultism. The term *New Age* itself refers to the *Age of Aquarius*, which, according to *New Age* followers, is dawning. It is supposed to bring peace and enlightenment and to reunite man with God.

In contrast to other cults, the *New Age Movement* is difficult to define. There is no *New Age Church*, no *New Age Religion*, no officially registered *New Age Organization*, no membership, no founder and no leader of the movement. Instead, it is a widespread way of thinking that appears in many forms, beliefs, and practices such as

Astrology, Aura, Black and White Magic, Chakras, Chi Energy, Crystals, Druidism, Eastern Mysticism, Extraterrestrials and UFOs, Firewalking, Gaia, Gnosticism, Hare Krishna, Hinduism, Human Potential Movement, Mind Science, Native American Spirituality, Near-death Experiences, Nirvana, Parapsychology, Psychic, Reincarnation, Shamanism, Spiritism, Ji Gong, Taoism, Tarot Cards, Theosophy, Trance-Channeling,

Transcendental Meditation, Transpersonal Psychology, Witchcraft, Yin-Yang, Yoga, Dungeons and Dragons, Astral Projection/Travel, Levitation, Spirit of the Glass, Freemasonry (Scottish Rite, Masonry, Blue Lodge, Eastern Star (for women), DeMolay, and Shriners), and Zen.

Some of the practices seem to be little more than innocent relaxation techniques with no religious content - only designed to reduce stress and physical tension. But actually all of them are based of one or more of the following beliefs

1. *All is one - all reality is part of the whole*
2. *Everything is God and God is everything*
3. *Man is God or part of God*
4. *Man never dies*
5. *Man can create his own reality.*

The *New Age Movement* uses a special terminology for these beliefs. Words like *holistic and synergistic thinking, networking, global unity and harmony, cosmic energy, awakening, consciousness, and human potential* dominate conversations and writings. They sound esoteric and fascinating, but also hide the true religious content behind a scientific appearance. As a result, *New Age* practices have made their way into almost every area of the culture - sociology, psychology, medicine, the government, ecology, science, arts, the business community, the media, entertainment, sports, education, and even the church. Christians and non-Christians alike have been seduced to accept practices and beliefs that are clearly based on anti-Christian doctrines.

History

Historically, the *New Age Movement* can be seen as the modern revival of ancient religious traditions and practices. Its actual original roots are found in the Garden of Eden, as described in **Genesis 3:4-5**

And the serpent said unto the woman, you shall not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

In the original lie, Satan questions God's word and authority and, disputes that death results from disobedience, and claims that through the acquisition of secret or Gnostic wisdom man can be enlightened and can be *like God*. Over the centuries, this lie resulted in a variety of religious traditions and occult practices, which were already strongly condemned in the Old Testament (**Deuteronomy 18:9-17; Isaiah 47:9-15**) but nevertheless developed in the pagan cultures. It continues to its ultimate state of development and will be revealed as Satan's one-world system at the end of the age (**Revelation 17-18**). (see *Pastor's lesson*)

The major world religions whose beliefs and practices are entwined with the *New Age Movement* are *Hinduism* (ca. 3,000 B.C.), *Buddhism*, (ca. 560 B.C.), and *Taoism*, (ca. 500 B.C.). Another prominent occultic influence was *Druidism*, the religion of the Celts, which extended from 300 B.C. into the middle ages. These teachings were transplanted into modern times by Emanuel *Swedenborg* (1688-1772), the *Theosophical Society* founded by Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), and through the *First World Parliament of Religions*, held in Chicago in 1893, which essentially initiated the spread of Hinduism throughout the United States. The 1960s witnessed a particular revival of Eastern mysticism and the study of secret wisdom from India. *Zen Buddhism*, *Carlos Castaneda*, *Transcendental Meditation*, and *Yoga* became very popular. In the eighties, *Shirley MacLaine's* books and television shows gave the *New Age Movement* more popular exposure and momentum.

Today, various research polls are consistently demonstrating that a significant shift has been occurring in the West and that millions of adults have embraced a world view that is totally at odds with the faith they profess. According to surveys 86% of Americans claim to be Christian, yet 72% reject the notion of absolute truth, 40% believe a *New Age* (pantheistic) view of God, 30% believe in reincarnation, and 36% believe that astrology is scientific.

The *New Age Movement* is now comprised of hundreds of groups and individuals who have gained significant influence on almost every area of our culture. The movement expresses itself in widely divergent forms, from the blatantly obvious to the subtle and from the organized religious to the secular ones. As a result, even many Christians have been fooled by *New Age* thinking and now tend to mix beliefs into their faith which in today's world sound so plausible but are completely wrong from a biblical perspective. In this sense, the *New Age Movement* is the successful continuation of Satan's ultimate lie, ultimately aiming at the seduction of Christianity.

For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall soew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things. (Mark 13:22-23)

On the other hand, not everything labeled with the term *New Age* is actually related to the *New Age Movement*. Record companies, for instance, have discovered, that the label *New Age* is good for marketing purposes. In reality *New Age* music only refers to a certain style of music. Many musicians suddenly found themselves in this category. You will find even certain classical music and some pretty good Christian music in this section.

Major Doctrines

As far as doctrines are concerned, there is nothing really new in *New Age*. Its two key elements - *Evolutionary Godhood*, the spiritual evolution of man into God,

and *Global Unity*, the assumption that everything is linked together - are only modern reformulations of ancient Hindu teachings and almost identical to the foundations of *Christian Science* or *Scientology* - if you abstract from certain peculiarities.

Nevertheless, the *New Age* formulation is smoother and more appealing. The new age, which is soon to come, shall bring peace and enlightenment, harmony, mutual love and acceptance - and who does not want that? Naturally, *New Age* followers look forward to the coming of a new leader who unites the world in love and harmony. *New Age* practices are designed to explore the human potential and to push man ahead into a new spiritual horizon, closer to God and closer to *being* God.

Therefore, we will not only discuss *New Age* beliefs but also reveal how they are hidden in the various *New Age* practices that can be found everywhere in this country.

Sources of Authority - anything but the Bible?

The *New Age Movement* rejects the idea of an absolute truth and therefore does not have any particular source of authority. The only absolute dogma in *New Age* is that *truth is relativistic* - each person has its own reality and subjective experience: what is true for one person may not be true for another. This makes it almost impossible to dispute with devoted *New Age* followers. If you have a different opinion, they simply say ``*it's fine - if you believe so, that is your reality*". But they do not think that your reality is relevant for them as well - at least not on the spiritual level.

Nevertheless, due to the sheer number of *New Age* groups there are many publications such as the *New Age Journal*, *Body Mind Spirit*, *Yoga Journal*, *Gnosis*, *East West*, *Noetic Sciences*, and *Omega*, which influence the minds of *New Age* followers and constantly stir up new concepts.

God

Even though many *New Age* adherents describe God in personal terms, the *New Age* concept of God is quite vague. *God* is an impersonal life force, consciousness or energy - much like ``*The Force*" in the movie *Star Wars*. The *New Age* view of the world and the universe is *monistic* and *pantheistic*, which means that everything that exists is of One essence, and that One essence is God. Everything is a different form of that essence and the *Divine Force* is what holds everything together.

There is a variety of colorful descriptions of this divine force in the many *New Age* publications and many names for God among different *New Age* groups, such as *God-consciousness*, *Universal Love*, *Self-Realization*, *the I AM*, *Higher*

Self, Brahman, Nirvana, etc. However, *New Age* generally rejects God as a personal eternal being who created, rules over, and defines the limits of His creation (**Acts 17:24-26**).

Man

The fact that God is in everything obviously elevates the position of man. *New Age* adherents often believe that man is *perfect and divine*, able to create his own reality. In *New Age*, **Psalm 46:10** reads as ``*Be still, and know that you are God*". Each individual thus has a *higher self* in separately and eternally related to its person. For some, this is the immortal soul, for others an extraterrestrial being. The higher self is immortal and has perfect memory. In *New Age* terminology, it lives in *holographic time* which is not bound to the linear order of time as we know it. It is also *androgynous*, that is in perfect balance between male and female, positive and negative energy.

Since man is intrinsically divine, perfect, and with unlimited potential, his only real problem is *ignorance* of that fact. Man's perception of finiteness is in reality an illusion. Thus he needs to become enlightened through experiential knowledge (*gnosis*). *New Age* groups offer various occultic techniques to enable individuals, and ultimately the world, to evolve into this one divine consciousness and to become God again.

An almost universal belief among *New Agers* is an adaptation of the Hindu concept of *reincarnation* which teaches that after death the soul, or essence comes back in another form to continue spiritual evolvment. *New Agers* misrepresent church history, the doctrines of Christianity, and often twist Scripture to support the idea that original Christianity taught reincarnation. For them, *resurrection* and being *born again* is just the same as reincarnation. They argue that the early church suppressed the doctrine of reincarnation and censored its teaching.

Salvation

Reincarnation is usually seen as a step in the progression towards Godhood. But progressive steps are not always guaranteed and the number of reincarnations may run into millions. That is determined by the law of *Karma* - the law of cause and effect. What you are now is determined by what you did in your previous existences. The higher self remembers everything and these memories need to be resolved and cleared if we are to go on to a higher enlightenment. Self-realization, total enlightenment, or illumination, where the soul enters into the endless freedom from the demanding control of karma, is the ultimate goal. From there on, there is no rebirth - one has reached the *Nirvana*, the place of passionless peace.

In contrast to Hinduism, none of the *New Age* books emphasizes ascetism or clean living as a way to clear the karma. Instead, there is a great emphasis on *Global Unity*. Since everyone and everything is linked together, man is to live in unity with man, nature, the earth, the universe, and God. The *New Age Movement* teaches that we will learn our proper divine relationship with one another and through this achieve harmony, mutual love, and unity. At a first glance, this appears to be a goal well worth to be pursued, but there are several caveats.

- The *New Age* understanding of unity with nature and the earth opposes the Scriptural teaching of man's superiority over plants and animals (**Genesis 1:26-27, 2:19**). While we certainly have to show more responsibility for what God has entrusted to us instead of abusing our planet as we currently do, this does not mean that there are no differences between animals and humans or that we should worship earth and nature, as *Native American Spirituality* and the *Gaia* movement use to do.
- Most *New Agers* believe that harmony can only be achieved through economic unity. They hope for a single world leader, who will eventually guide the world into a harmonious economic whole. The scriptures warn us that such a leader will very likely be the coming Antichrist (**2. Thessalonians 2:3-4**):

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

There is a very thin borderline here between honorable goals and ideas that are in sharp contrast with the Scriptures and we have to learn to discern properly.

Jesus Christ

The *New Age* teachings about Jesus Christ have become very popular among those who believe Jesus to be only a great moral teacher. They believe that during the "lost 18 years" before Jesus appeared publicly at the age of 30, Jesus became an explorer who traveled to far off lands to the spiritual centers in India and Egypt, and Tibet, where he studied under various spiritual masters. During that time he evolved to the state of "the Christ", the ultimate state of self-realization. When he returned to his native people in Israel, He taught a Hindu world view of *Christ consciousness*, expressed in terms that the Hebrews would understand. So Jesus was merely a way-shower, whose primary function is to awaken humanity and illumine the path.

This contradicts everything Jesus said and did. The theory of Jesus studying in India under the gurus simply does not fit into the New Testament record. The

gurus are all vegetarians. Jesus ate the Passover lamb, fed multitudes with fish, after His resurrection ate fish demonstrating to He was actually resurrected bodily. Jesus taught one life and then judgment, heaven or hell, which certainly is antithetical to Hinduism. He only quoted books and prophets from the Old Testament, none else. Jesus was without sin, so he could not have broken any even the smallest Jewish law, which means that he had to attend three Jewish feasts every year. Traveling back and forth between India and Israel all the time would simply have been impossible. So, if we accept the biblical account of Jesus, he could not have been in India during the "lost 18 years". Besides, he did not need to study. **Luke 2:41-47** clearly points out that at the age of twelve Jesus already had all the knowledge he needed.

The Holy Spirit

There are no teachings about the Holy Spirit.

Things to come

We are at the beginning of a new age - the *Age of Aquarius*, the eleventh sign of the zodiac. Astrologers say that this age is characterized by a new religious atmosphere and a heightened degree of spiritual and cosmic consciousness. It will be a time of liberation of the mind, of love and enlightenment, an age of a balanced viewpoint. During this age we will move beyond the masculine God the Father, who has dominated the Piscean age during the past 2000 years, and be nurtured by the Mother-Goddess, a feminine energy.

There are different opinions about when the Aquarian age will begin. Some say that we are already in it. Others believe it will be complete in 2062. There are no astronomical data available to determine this, so it mostly depends on what people believe. In any case, it is supposed to be inaugurated by the coming of a supermind, a perfect being who will lead us into a long awaited era of universal peace, love and joy. For *New Ager*s this is the being anticipated by all religions - the Hindu *Avatar*, the *Al Mahdi* of the Muslims, the Jewish *Messiah*, the Buddhist *Maitreya*, or the *second coming of Christ* - they all point to the same being that is soon to come. Actually, in April 1982 full-page ads were placed in all major newspapers around the world claiming that "THE CHRIST IS NOW HERE" but he has never been revealed publicly.

From a biblical perspective, events will be quite different. Christ will return visibly for all the world to see - there is no need to announce his presence. But the rapture of his church will be followed by the great tribulation for the unsaved and not an age of universal happiness. Afterwards, the millennial kingdom will be reigned by Jesus Christ, and not by some new Mother-Goddess.

New Age Practices and Beliefs

New Age is much less a definite cult which emphasizes worship and religious teachings than a movement that is characterized by its practices and the underlying beliefs. In general, *New Age* practices are designed to prepare people for the new age to come and to push them ahead into a new spiritual horizon, towards the *Global Unity*, closer to God and closer to being God. In the following we will briefly discuss some of the activities that come under the umbrella of the *New Age Movement*.

Astrology

Astrology is a method using the position of the planets, sun and moon at the time and place of birth as signposts to explain the person's character, life and destiny. It is based on the occult belief that man and the universe are connected by a mystical force, or are - using *New Age* terminology - in global unity. Therefore, man is a microcosm of the patterns of his planets at birth, and the planets reflect one's inner self. The task of the *astrologer* or the *horoscope* is to interpret the constellations of the star in order to determine what the future will bring for a particular person.

The word *horoscope* comes from the Greek, meaning literally a *watcher of the hour*. A chart of the planetary position at birth purported to reveal the person's destiny. There are three main components of the chart: the *planets*, the *Zodiac signs* and the *Twelve houses*. The planets represent people and aspects of the emotional, mental or spiritual self. The zodiac signs describe the way in which the planets are limited or expanded. The houses represent various areas such as self, home, marriage, career, etc. Thus, roughly, the planets are *who* or *what*, the zodiac signs are *how* and the houses are *where*. Additionally, the angles between the planets must be considered. Present and future influences are read by comparing the present movement of planets to the birth chart, a method called *transits*. Another method, the progressed chart, is calculated with each day after birth equaling a year in real life.

Traditionally, *Astrology* was *fatalistic*: the chart delineated a personality and course already ordained by the planetary influences. Aspects of the chart were seen as either beneficial or adverse. Today, the humanistic view of a person as the master of his or her fate has turned the chart into a set of possibilities and choices. Chart symbols are viewed as having both negative and positive possibilities, which makes the chart a blueprint for the self and soul, a pattern that can be rearranged in various ways by the self-aware individual. For the *New Ager*, *Astrology* is a tool to "know thyself" as well as a tool of divination. Modern

Astrology prefers to call interpretations of the future "coming trends" which will help us to make choices.

There is no clear evidence of how *Astrology* began, but most historians believe that the Chaldeans were the first to develop it. Already in **Deuteronomy 18:9-12** the Bible strongly condemns divination and worship of the heavens, both of which *Astrology* is a part. Verses like **Deuteronomy 4:19, 17:3, Daniel 2:27-28, 5:7, Isaiah 47:13, and Acts 7:42** are equally clear.

People have pointed out that *Astrology* occasionally makes very accurate predictions and are therefore convinced the chart is working based on spiritual and mystical universal laws. While the accuracy of certain predictions cannot be disputed, the very fact that not *all* predictions are 100% accurate clearly indicates that *Astrology* is not from God, which can only mean that those involved in *Astrology* operate - often unknowingly - on demonic supernatural power.

Channelling

Channeling is the process whereby a human host claims to enter into an altered state of consciousness thereby allowing a spirit entity to take possession of their body and give instructions to *New Age* believers. This altered state can be in varying degrees of control. Some channelers will have complete control of their body and simply speak the message of the spirit guide. Others will completely lose consciousness, entering a deep trance as the message is given from the entity. A third group of channelers will often remain conscious but will voluntarily yield control of their body for the purposes of allowing the entity to use their hands for writing messages. This form of *Channeling* is more commonly known as *Automatic Writing*.

The history of *Channeling* can be traced back to its earlier more blatantly occult roots of *Spiritism*. In the 1840's the *Fox sisters* claimed to communicate with the spirit of a murdered man. Their convincing act tricked thousands until 1886 when they finally confessed that they were frauds. Nevertheless, the *Spiritism* movement was under way. Proponents of *Spiritism, Automatic Writing* and other forms of communication with the dead, were *Helena Petrovna Blavatsky*, who founded *Theosophy* in 1875, *Alice Bailey*, founder of the *Arcane School* in 1923, and others who have influenced the development of *Channeling*. But it was not until the 1960's and '70's that *Channeling* became commonly accepted and even fashionable. Today, there are ten thousands of channels throughout the world today. These channelers travel to *New Age* fairs, seminars and conferences throughout the world, where *New Age* devotees flock by the tens of thousands to hear the latest truths.

The ultimate message of the *New Age* is manifest in the message of the various channelers. That message being, All is God, you are a part of the All, therefore you are God. Since you are God then you can alter reality to fit your view of truth.

New Agers come to the channelers to find out how they can use the spirit world to influence reality. Again, the Bible strongly forbids communication with the dead (*Necromancy*), as expressed in **Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:9-12 & 15; 1 Samuel 28; 1 Chronicle 10:13-14; Isaiah 8:19**. It should also be noted that channelers either commit fraud (i.e. fake spiritual communication), are self-deceived (2 Thessalonians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:12) or in actual contact with demons who are masquerading as deceased spirit masters (see **Isaiah 19:3; Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 4:1-3**). Neither of these options is in any way beneficial.

Psychics

Very strongly related to channellers and astrologers are *psychics*, who claim to have many gifts or talents in the area of extrasensual perception, clairvoyance, communication with the spirit world, abilities to read the human aura and use these special skills as a healer or reader. The history of psychics may be traced back thousands of years ago to the seers, shamans, and soothsayers of ancient pagan religions and occult practices. Their spread through Europe and America began in the early 19th century and continued constantly over the past 150 years. During the lifetime of *Jeanne Dixon*, America's most famous psychic, America experienced unparalleled growth in the interest and acceptance of psychics and paranormal phenomena. Over her 50 year career Dixon was advisor to world leaders including US presidents and wrote eight books. At the time of her death in January 1997, Dixon syndicated columns were featured in over 800 daily newspapers worldwide.

Today, the psychic industry has become a remarkably successful business. Psychics offer their services day by day through hundreds of late night commercials and toll-free phone numbers. Dionne Warwick's *Psychic Friends Network* alone is estimated to receive 3 million minutes of calls a month at about \$4 per minute. Psychic fairs are commonplace in the US. Metaphysical and *New Age* book stores can be found easily in almost every American city, and the Internet is booming with *cyberpsychics*.

Much of the mystique and lure of modern psychics is the alleged *proof* of their claims through various alleged supernatural manifestations. People often trust psychics because of their persuasive demonstrations, although the history of psychics is littered with cases of proven fraud. Professional magician James Randi, for instance, has publicly exposed a number of psychics, spiritualists, channelers, and charlatans. One of Randi's first targets was Israeli psychic *Uri Geller*, tested by the Stanford Research Institute for his powers to bend spoons and levitate objects. Randi demonstrated that the tricks were actually very simple and much assisted by the people's imagination.

The likelihood of fraud and fakery is one reason the Bible warns against relying on *signs and wonders* as evidence for truth-claims. Jesus always refused to give additional signs to those who did not believe his message, for he knew that

people get easily deceived by signs. ``*For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect*'' (**Mark 13:22**). The Bible tells us not to look at celebrated random examples of some accurate predictions, but requires a prophet to be 100% accurate all the time. Jeanne Dixon certainly was not always accurate, and neither are any of today's psychics. But even real examples of spiritual manifestations would not prove the phenomena is harmless or from God. The Bible warns of demons, *seducing spirits* and *doctrines of devils* (**Timothy 4:1**).

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (**1 John 4:1**).

Extraterrestrials and UFOs

The UFO phenomenon has increased steadily over the last 50 years. While in the 1950's only 3-1/2% of the US population believed in UFOs this number has risen to an impressive 75-85% today. The past has no shortage of witnessing strange sightings in the heavens that could not be verified as comets or some other natural phenomenon and the search for *extraterrestrial intelligences* is well underway. There is the Californian S.E.T.I. Institute (*Search for extraterrestrial Intelligence*) and numerous other groups. The *Voyager* spacecraft has been sent out into space accompanied with a message to try and contact some other life in outer space. The *Aricebo Observatory* in Puerto Rico is involved as well as many others from different countries.

How did we get to this view of mankind being just another species in the universe? It has become the inherent consequence of our acceptance of the evolution theory. It is only natural, we are told, that while we were developing here on this planet the same could have been happening elsewhere given the correct conditions. Given enough time anything can happen. Some scientists even suggest that there could be beings so beyond man on the evolutionary scale that they would look like Gods to us and many people are certainly fascinated by this idea.

It is interesting to observe how the idea that extraterrestrial beings could pay us a visit mutated from a scare into something that quite a few people actually hope for. In the late 40's Orson Wells narration *The War of the Worlds* over the radio scared hundreds of people out of their houses. Through the 1950's the movies expressed our fears of these alien visitors as enemies waiting to take over our planet. But slowly our attitude changed. TV shows like *Star Trek* gave us space as the final frontier, and an acceptance to move out beyond our earth. New movies came showing that UFOs were not really our enemies but our friends, welcoming us to a new frontier.

In fact, true UFO believers are looking for a *technological savior* to show up in the sky and expect spirit beings to land here on earth to help establish a new world order. More than 700,000 people have already reported sightings of UFOs or claimed abductions. Others claim to be in constant communication with extraterrestrials. They receive *Transmissions* through what we already know as *Channelling* and *Automatic Writing*. The messages are identical to ones the mediums and spiritists have been getting for centuries, just a bit more with technological slant.

One message received over and over again says ``*The Christ of the Aquarian age will arrive in the first public spaceship landing, to be seen by all your people on international satellite television*"', and many *UFO* believers are looking forward to that day. Just imagine a landing of UFOs and one comes out arrayed in white saying he is the Christ. Do you think the world would be convinced? After all he came just as he left from the sky and every eye will behold him. What if he had powers and was able to do signs or miracles, how could anyone refute it?

But if that were to happen, would it really be Christ stepping out of the UFO? Wouldn't it be just one of the greatest deception ever fostered upon mankind - with the potential of leading millions of people astray? What can we actually expect from UFOs and extraterrestrials?

According to the descriptions of UFOs defy the laws of physics. They travel at speeds of 5,000 to 10,000 mph without making a sonic boom. They make immediate stops and survive the inertia. They are invisible on photographs, disappear and reappear somewhere else. So if UFOs actually exist, they are certainly not from this physical world and you don't really want to get in contact with them. Reports of those who claim to have been abducted by UFOs are strongly reminiscent of medieval tales of encounters with demons and the communication between extraterrestrials and mankind strongly resembles well-known occult techniques.

The Bible does not give the slightest hint about life on other planets. Scripture indicates that God created only two kinds of intelligent beings, angels and men. Man was placed here on earth, created in the image of God and with a special relationship to him. No other intelligent beings have ever been created and there are certainly no extraterrestrials. The belief in UFOs and extraterrestrials is nothing but a technologically modified version of the age-old deception that shall lure people into getting into a contact with demons and follow practices that the Scriptures clearly forbid.

Hare Krishna

Hare Krishna, the Krishna consciousness movement can be traced back the India of early 1500's, where public chanting the names of Krishna was first practiced. During the next centuries it experienced several declines and revivals

in India and began to conquer the Western World in 1965, when *A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada* emigrated to the United States, opened a store-front center, published his religious magazine *Back to Godhead*, and founded the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness*.

The spirit of the late sixties helped the movement to grow rapidly. George Harrison's song *My Sweet Lord*, probably the most famous instance of public *Hare Krishna* chanting, made the movement quite popular. After the death of Prabhupada in 1977 the *International Society for Krishna Consciousness* has gone through several legal and doctrinal conflicts, including several murder cases and child abuse lawsuits, but managed to survive until this day.

Essentially, *Hare Krishna* is a Hindu-type religion with its own temples and preaching centers. It looks to Krishna as the "*Supreme Personality, the Lord, the complete whole, the Absolute Truth*". Krishna is the creator of all that exists; even the gods worshiped in other religions are simply "*plenary expansions or parts of Krishna*". Krishna is the Supersoul who enters into everything that is. Thus everything is just "*part and parcel of the Supreme Lord*".

The Bible is acceptable in *Hare Krishna* but it is taught that the Vedic literature of Hinduism contains much more specific information about God than you'll find in the Bible. Jesus Christ, for instance, is one of the demi-god manifestations of Krishna, sent to be the spiritual master of particular people in a particular time. But the true mediator between God (Krishna) and humanity is A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. He is referred to as *His Divine Grace*, a title he chose for himself. It is even said of him that "*Prabhupada was a world-genius, greater than Jesus*" and that he is to be "*honored as highly as the Supreme and Almighty Lord*".

According to *Hare Krishna*, man's only problem is his lust for temporal pleasures rather than love for Krishna. This lust keeps humanity trapped in the material world, rather than pursuing salvation, through millions of reincarnations and the law of Karma. Salvation from this endless cycle is attained only through following the spiritual disciplines of Krishna consciousness. These spiritual disciplines include:

1. *Chanting* the Hare Krishna mantra, the holy name of the Lord Krishna for about 1-1/2 to 2 hours each day, which is considered the solution to all problems.
2. *Distributing Hare Krishna literature*, which may result in the salvation of both member and recipient
3. *Keeping the prohibitions* against four degrading activities that cause humanity to submit to lustful. These are (1) gambling, (2) intoxication from alcohol, drugs, caffeine, and nicotine, (3) sexual activity outside marriage and for any purpose other than procreation, and (4) animal slaughter - which means you have to be strictly vegetarian.

4. *Dressing appropriately.* Men are supposed to shave their head except for a small tuft toward the back of their head and wear an orange Hindu dress. Women wear beautiful and modest Indian *saris*. In recent years the dress code has been eased for those whose assigned duties related to meetings with the general public.
5. *A strictly regulated communal life.*

Although *Hare Krishna's* emphasis is more religious than the average *New Age* activity, it is based on the same beliefs. The aim at a high degree of purity is certainly honorable but the *Hare Krishna* approach is not the way to salvation. Salvation is not earned by erasing karma through reincarnation, repetition of a mantra, or following an extensive list of rules and rituals. Humans live only once, and then face judgment from God (**Hebrews 9:27**) and the only way to get saved is provided by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

Transcendental Meditation and Yoga

Transcendental Meditation, which is advertised as a meditative method of obtaining serenity without drugs, was brought to the West in 1959 by *Maharishi Mahesh Yogi*. It offered peace, happiness and spiritual growth through a system of deep meditation and soon acquired a celebrated following including such famous names as the Beatles, Mia Farrow, and various sport stars. However, its popularity sagged in the late 60s and the Maharishi saw it necessary to revise *Transcendental Meditation*. He shifted the emphasis in the presentation of *Transcendental Meditation* from the spiritual to the practical and scientific to evade both materialistic and religious resistance to his spiritual teachings. *Transcendental Meditation* was presented to the Western world as a scientific way of reducing stress and finding peace within oneself. This strategy permitted *Transcendental Meditation* to obtain government support and a place in the curriculum of public schools. Today, it has become the most widely practiced form of meditation in the country. Thousands of school teachers have become meditators through this system and many have encouraged their students to practice *Transcendental Meditation* as well.

However, while *Transcendental Meditation* strives to couch its concepts in neutral terms and promotes its medicinal benefits as a form of relaxation, it nevertheless incorporates the fundamentals of Hinduism into its approach. Though the techniques can be learned in a purely mechanical way, answers to *How* and *Why* inevitably take the novice into the realm of Eastern philosophy.

According to *Transcendental Meditation*, man's ultimate need is for a state of consciousness called *Unity* and man's deepest difficulty is his lack of consciousness of his own divine Being. Instead of attaining consciousness of God, people try to be good or merely think *about* God. To quote Maharishi Mahesh Yogi himself, "All misery in the world is due to missing this one point"

The *Puja*, an initiation rite leads the novice goes through a ceremony worshipping the Hindu deities and offering them sacrifices. It is only after this ceremony has been performed that one may receive his personal *mantra* to meditate upon. The mantra is given by the master to a follower as a kind of weapon to ward off reasoning, thinking, and conceptualization and unite the meditator with the divine within him. In *Transcendental Meditation* the mantra is a group of sounds that is to be repeated silently over and over again in order to draw the mind towards its own essential nature. The mantra must never be spoken aloud or revealed to anyone. There is a reason for keeping the mantra secret. Devotees would quickly find out that their personal mantra was by no means chosen for them only and that it is much more than just a meditation device. Maharishi himself admits that the use of the mantra invokes gods and spirits from the spirit world - and that is its only purpose.

Gradually, the initiate comes under the control of both his instructor and his own mantra. There comes a time when the constant repetition of his mantra produces a numbness of mind, when he does not even hear himself praying to the gods. His mind empties of all thought, leading towards the *merging of self* with the so called *absolute deity*, Brahma. Eventually, adherents to *Transcendental Meditation* lose touch with reality and many end up with mental disorders. Quite a few suffer demon attack and even possession. It is not unusual that *Transcendental Meditation* adherents take up the occult in its many forms, including levitation, witchcraft etc.

Even *Yoga* exercises - currently taught to about 4 and 5 million people each week - are not as innocent as they may seem. Many people take up *Yoga* as a harmless pastime to help relieve tension and aches. Experts say, however, that physically yoga is no more effective than any other form of training. On the other hand, the fact remains that even physical yoga is inextricably united with Eastern metaphysics. Every single minute movement to be found in any yoga exercise is really a prayer to the Hindu gods! Each passive, gentle movement is a symbol which 'speaks' to the spirits and is designed to reach a state of union with oneself as God. In other words, whoever practices yoga actually participates in a Hindu ritual.

Unfortunately, because Maharishi Mahesh Yogi has claimed that *Transcendental Meditation* is not a religion, many Jewish and Christian leaders have endorsed *Transcendental Meditation* to their congregations, and practice it themselves. But the origin of *Transcendental Meditation*, its initiation rite, nature, practice, and theory are religious at the core. *Transcendental Meditation* is pure Hinduism and not compatible with Christianity. Christians who take up *Transcendental Meditation* or *Yoga* seriously, will eventually lose all love for their Savior and God, begin to accept *other gospels*, and usually start to say that God can be reached by other faiths. Some may also experience the other horrific problems already mentioned.

Transcendental Meditation is not to be fooled with or toyed with. It is a cult, a lie of the devil, and cannot, in any form, be mixed with Christianity.

It is a sad truth that many of the *New Age* beliefs already made their way into the curriculum of our public schools, often under the disguise of neutral, academic, psychological, or scientific sounding terminology. Terms like *transpersonal psychology, guided imagery, visualization, human potential, inner guides* sound so innocent. Unconventional educators and parents may actually believe that by endorsing these disciplines they are truly helping students and society at large.

Indeed, Yoga and meditation may calm a nervous student; visualization and guided imagery could help improve his creativity; teaching principles of psychic development may enhance his sense of self-importance and increase his sense of power. But many educators and parents do not realize that these techniques already cross the thin line between a normal use of relaxation or imagination and occult techniques or philosophies. Integrating these methods and ideas into school curricula will lay a heavy burden on our children and future generations. Again, we must learn to discern: unconventional new methods may be very helpful but we must not allow the occult to spread further in our schools.

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that religious practice in the schools constitutes a violation of the Establishment clause of the First Amendment since public schools cannot promote the practice or ideology of any religion. If we cannot teach Christian values in schools anymore, we can at least make sure that other religions will not be taught as well - even if they come under the disguise of scientific terms.

Freemasonry is a Non-Christian Occult Religion

Freemasonry goes by many names, including the Scottish Rite, Masonry, Blue Lodge, Eastern Star (for women), and Shriners. Historically, Masonry has had a strong unifying effect on the American black community. Many people who consider themselves Christians, both black and white, are Masons.

Most people, **even many Masons, incorrectly** believe that Masonry is merely a fraternal order, like the Lions Club, Elks Club, etc. **Masonry expressly denies it is a religion. Nothing could be further from the truth. Freemasonry is a non-Christian occult religion that teaches a different way to salvation and considers Jesus, Buddha, Confucius, and all spiritual leaders to be only messengers of "The Grand Architect of the Universe".** The Grand Architect is *not* just another term for Jehovah. Freemasonry teaches that there are **two** basic Gods: Adonay, ***the god of the Christians***, a god of **evil** and ***Lucifer***, a separate **god of good. Freemasonry considers the religious scriptures of all religions to be equally valid.**

Freemasonry is not compatible with Christianity

The Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church prohibits Masons from becoming members of their church. The Nazarene Church has banned from its membership any person who is a member of a secret organization. Ever since 1728 Catholics have been prohibited from joining the Masons. That stance was reaffirmed by the Vatican in 1985 with a pronouncement that any Catholic who joins the Masons is "in a state of grave sin and cannot partake in Holy Communion." (In Catholicism, this means that if the person dies without repenting he will go to Hell.)

The British Methodist Church condemned Masonry at its General Assembly in 1985. The Assembly acted on a report of its Faith and Order Committee. That report, entitled *Freemasonry & Methodism*, outlined the occultic nature of Masonry in detail. The report concluded with these words: "There is a great danger the Christian who becomes a Freemason will find himself compromising his Christian beliefs or his allegiance to Christ, perhaps without realizing what he is doing."

PARTIAL LIST OF CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS THAT CONDEMN MASONRY

- Methodist Church of England
- Wesleyan Methodist Church
- Russian Orthodox Church
- Assemblies of God
- Church of the Nazarene
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church
- Reformed Presbyterian Church
- Evangelical Mennonite Church
- Church of Scotland
- Grace Brethren
- Roman Catholic Church
- Christian Reformed Church in America
- Synod Anglican Church of England
- Free Church of Scotland
- General Association of Regular Baptist Churches
- Independent Fundamentalist Churches of America
- The Evangelical Lutheran Synod
- Baptist Union of Scotland
- Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
- Presbyterian Church in America

Like many false religions, Masonry claims to have ancient roots -- Masonic writings claim that Masonry began in ancient Egypt, before Moses, even back to "the time of Enoch". Other Masonic writings date Masonry back to "the time of the building of Solomon's Temple."

According to non-Masons who have **researched historical records**, there is **no** indication of **any** Masonic types of activity before the Middle Ages. Masonry **may**

have developed out of the mediaeval trade guilds; but most investigators believe it began in the early 1700's.

Summary

The *New Age Movement* is a conglomerate of seemingly unrelated groups, techniques, and beliefs that keep influencing each other and constantly create new mixtures. Its characteristic is not a homogeneous doctrine, but practices that are based on a modern version of Satan's original lie. Although no leader can be made out, one can clearly observe how Satan himself orchestrates the whole movement, spreading his lies wherever he can find people open to deception.

Discussions with *New Agers* sometimes appear to be hopeless. But if you address the fundamental issues - the irrationality of relativism, the inconsistencies of living out the *New Ager* view of the world, factual and historical errors, and the biblical account of the real God, Jesus, and gospel - then they may realize that there is a choice to be made instead of blurring the distinctions, and that love and forgiveness can not be found in an impersonal force but only in the God of the Bible.

WHY CONFESSING AND RENOUNCING CULT AND OCCULT INVOLVEMENT ARE IMPORTANT

Satan, the thief, is the enemy of mankind, especially Christians, and the enemy of God. He comes only to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). He looks for ways to enter into our lives and homes. He robs us through temptation and deception. One of the acts of our sinful nature is witchcraft (Gal. 5:19-21). Today as in the past, many so-called Christians have divided allegiance – partly to God, partly to Satan. This is spiritual adultery (2 Kings 17:41). Involvement in false religions and the occult is one of the major means used by Satan to enter into our lives and our homes. Through these, he creates strongholds in our lives, through which he works to destroy us and the lives of others, especially to family members in succeeding generations. God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:3-6). It is very clear in Scripture that we should have no foreign gods among us, and not to bow down to them (Psalm 81:9). We are also warned against the practice of divination, or sorcery, interpretation of omens, witchcraft, casting of spells, in being a medium or spiritist, or who consults the dead, for these are detestable to the Lord (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Even what we consider as “small matter” or things done for fun such as horoscope, card reading, palm reading, spirit of the glass, others, are serious to the Lord.

To demolish satanic strongholds in our lives (also called doorways), God has given us very powerful weapons to destroy Satan's schemes, weapons that have divine power to demolish strongholds (2 Cor. 10: 4-5) and our minds are the

primary battleground. Our weapons are: 1. the blood of Christ shed on the cross – the full price for our victory is already paid; 2. the truth of the Word of God – defeats Satan’s strategies of temptation and deception; and 3. the gifts of the Spirit – pinpoints areas to minister.

To confess (*homologeo*) means “to agree” or “to concede”. To confess Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9-10) means to concede or to yield to His Lordship. To confess our sins means to agree or admit that we did it. Confession breaks the lies of the enemy in our lives as we acknowledge the truth of Jesus’ Lordship, the reality of sin and our need for healing and cleansing. God promises to totally forgive and cleanse us when we admit our sin to Him (1 Jn. 1:9). When we confess our sins to each other, it releases healing (Ja. 5:16).

Do you want to be forgiven of your sins? Confess to God.

Do you want to be healed? Confess your sins one to another.

Confession breaks the power of sin and brings freedom from false religions and occult involvement.

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

What is the best way to find out whether we’re dealing with a cult or not?

The best way to detect a counterfeit is to know the original very well. It has been said that this is the way cashiers in banks are trained to recognize fake money. They just deal so much with “the real thing” that they immediately know when they have a counterfeit bill in their hands. It is the same when we deal with cults. We have to know the Word of God very well to avoid falling into the traps of a cult. That is, we shouldn’t just know the terminology of the Bible, we shouldn’t just be able to cite Bible verses – we must have a clear understanding they mean. Yes, it is extremely important that you know your Bible well – but that is what many cults do as well. In fact the Mormons and Jehova’s Witnesses can probably cite more verses than most true Christians. But that is not the point – they mean something entirely different when they use the same words as you. So you must be able to express in your own words what certain passages mean and how they relate to the rest of the word. Otherwise you can get easily confused.

There is no exchange to a daily devotion to God in quiet time, in serious study of the Word, in prayer, in fellowship, in obedience, in sharing the Gospel, in trusting God. In short, a Spirit-filled Christian walking according to the Word of God (review the Wheel Illustration we have already learned well before), can readily spot a cult and occult, avoid them, and effectively help those who are in bondage of its power and teaching.

Ephesians 6:10-18 should be an effective daily reminder to all Christians that we are in constant warfare. **WE ARE AT WAR WITH SATAN AND HIS DARK FORCES.** This is first and foremost, a battle for the truth, and the Word of God is the key to winning this battle.

WARNING: In our fight against counterfeits, it is enough to recognize them and deal with them. Do not fall into the temptation of being engrossed in learning their deep secrets, for it only glorifies the devil. Strive to know the truth in the Bible, not the deep secrets of the darkness. It is easy to spot a counterfeit if we know the **REAL THING** so well.

FAITHFUL TO THE END

Finally, let us not grow weary in keeping the Christian faith, nor in exercising it, though for now, we face many trials and difficulties. Let us persevere, focusing on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:1,2). Let us press on (Phil. 3:13,14) until we see the Lord Jesus face to face, and say to us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant! (Matt. 25:21)."