“When Did People Start Worshiping Yahweh?”

What is the history/origin of belief in Yahweh? I am being told that Yahweh was one of many gods initially believed in by the Canaanites, and eventually the followers were better at presenting Yahweh as the God of Israel?

First, let’s define worship. Worship is the act of expressing reverence, devotion and adoration towards God. Rituals, singing songs, prayers and ceremonies represent the act of worship.

Next, before answering your question, I’m convinced a critical explanation of scripture will suffice to help add credibility. The book of Nehemiah states that God made the heavens and the host of heavens (9:6). The heavens, in this passage, refers to the sky or the expanse that is above the surface of the earth. The term “heaven of heavens” refers to everything outside of the earth’s atmosphere. These are the planets, galaxies, etc. This passage also mentions the singular word host which means “the stars” or “celestial bodies.” Now, I do not want to confuse you, because the plural word “hosts” apply to God’s angel armies. With that, the passage of scripture concludes, “and the heavenly host bows down before You”{1}. Some translations state, “…the heavenly host worship You.” If we take this into account, we could say that according to Genesis 1:1, worship regarding nature started after Yahweh created it. According to Deuteronomy 33:27, the eternal attribution of the God of Israel indicates the worship of Him pre-exists the creation of the earth through the worship of the angels in heaven (Isaiah 40:28, Romans 1:20, Revelation 4:8).

The name YHWH (*Yahweh*) first appears in Exodus 3:14 when God made Himself known to Moses: “I AM WHO I AM. . . . Say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.”{3} This links to

"The Real Formal Full Personal Name of God"{3} in Exodus 6:2-3. The name reflects His redeeming acts regarding His chosen people. It parallels the need of the Hebrews during their captivity in Egypt thus largely translated as "I am/will be present."

Researchers have yet to conclude whether Canaanites worship paralleled the worship YHWH of the Israelites. The suggestions indicate the Canaanites may have used the name Yahweh in worship along with other deities, yet with no evidence of true relationship with the God of Moses—like using the word "god" today in a broad sense rather than using "The LORD God." We do know that the Yahweh of the Israelites responded to Moses and to the cry of the Israelites. We cannot say the same for the Canaanites. Because no evidence of Yahweh responding to Canaanite worship exists, this could indicate that Canaanite worship lacked value.

Notes

1. New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Nehemiah 9:6.
2. New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Exodus 3:14.
3. Martin A. Shields and Ralph K. Hawkins, "YHWH," ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

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“How Do You Respond to These Claims of Islam Apologists?”

How would you respond to these common claims that Muslims make with the intention of trying to show that Islam is true, i.e., the one true religion:

1) “Islam is not a religion in the common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one’s private life. It is a complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life – individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, and national and international.”

2) “Islam is named after the action of submitting to God’s command and will and not a person. Other religions are often named after a person or people. For instance, Christianity is named after Christ, Judaism is named after the tribe of Juda, and Buddhism is named after Buddha. Islam is not named after Muhammad because Islam existed before him.”

3)”Islam in its clear and direct way of expressing truth has a tremendous amount of appeal for any seeker of knowledge. It is the solution for all the problems of life. It is a guide toward a better and complete life glorifying in all its phases God, the Almighty Creator and the Merciful Nourisher.”

4) “Islam is the most rational religion. It gives clear code of life.”

5) “Islam is the first and the final religion of mankind.”

6) “Islam is the shortest and broadest road that leads to God.”

Thanks for writing. You ask a great question. This is a subject we as an organization want every Christian to be able to answer. It's also one that's so important every person needs to wrestle with this question.

What is the one true religion?

Is it Islam? Is it Christianity? Judaism? Buddhism? Atheism? Hinduism?

For the record I believe Christianity is the one true religion. But that's not your question. So I will focus on responding to your claims.

Whatever you do, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." (Romans 14:5)

First I will respond to each issue one at a time. At the end I will respond in general and share some helpful tips.

1) "Islam is not a religion in the common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one's private life. It is a complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life – individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, and national and international."

When people compare worldviews, they need to do a little philosophy first. Before they get going, they need to determine the parameters for the analysis. For example, how will the one true religion be determined? There are any number of ways this question can be answered. And the way in which that question is answered correspondingly affects the conclusion.

To exemplify my point here I will take an absurd set of parameters. One could begin by setting the parameters that the one true religion will be determined by the worldview that

allows for a world with maximal quantities of ice cream.

Then whichever worldview allows for maximal quantities of delicious frozen dessert is determined to be the one true religion, or worldview.

As much as I assume you enjoy eating copious amounts of ice cream as I do, these parameters are intentionally absurd. Still my point is illustrated. Before a conclusion can be drawn comparing two worldviews, there needs to be an independent set of parameters that will determine which one is in fact true.

The statement that Islam has answers for every aspect of life and human experience, not just the individual's inner experience, is a good starting point.

I agree with this assessment. Islam does have answers for every aspect of life; Islam is a worldview. However, it is not unique because it is a worldview. There are other perspectives/religions that make the same claim as well.

So in that sense I would respond by saying, Islam is not the obvious choice for the one true religion based sheerly on the fact that it is a worldview because of the presence of other competing and contradictory worldviews making the same claim, Christianity among them.

2) "Islam is named after the action of submitting to God's commands and will and not a person. Other religions are often named after a person or people. For instance, Christianity is named after Christ, Judaism is named after the tribe of Juda, and Buddhism is named after Buddha. Islam is not named after Muhammad because Islam existed before him."

As mentioned above, before one draws a conclusion, set the parameters for comparison. Is the one true religion going to be determined by the one whose name is NOT taken after its founder? If so, then Islam is in contention for the title,

though not the only contender. The claim is also true of Hinduism, Atheism, Nones, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Perhaps the claim is made that Islam's not being named for its founder evidences its eternal nature. Okay, that's a better argument for Islam being the one true religion. However, the biggest problem with this statement is the massive non-sequitur. It does not follow that Islam has always existed because it is not named for its founder. Those two claims are certainly consistent with each other. They do not contradict each other. However, the evidence fails to justify the conclusion.

3) "Islam in its clear and direct way of expressing truth has a tremendous amount of appeal for any seeker of knowledge. It is the solution for all the problems of life. It is a guide toward a better and complete life glorifying in all its phases God, the Almighty Creator and the Merciful Nourisher."

This is the first claim that comes close to the point I've made twice already. It begins setting forth criteria by which any worldview could be compared. Here the claim under examination is that Islam is the one true religion because it provides knowledge to those who seek. It provides solutions to life problems. It is a guide to a better and complete life.

This is a great start. The next step would be to define the terms concretely. What is knowledge? Solutions to which of life's problems? What is the good life?

4) "Islam is the most rational religion. It gives clear code of life."

Again, this is another step closer to defining parameters to compare competing worldviews. The claim here is that Islam is the most logical. This one would be difficult to argue just because of the sheer nature of things about life and this world to which we just don't have rational answers. The one arguing this point would have a monumental task ahead of him

of cataloguing what's logical, what is not, and then comparing one system against the other. Again, logic would need to be defined as well.

5) "Islam is the first and the final religion of mankind."

This one is difficult to take seriously. First, scholars of religion do not date Islam as the oldest religion. Second, neither is it the final religion historically. Many other religions have formed since the 8th century. Consider Secular atheism, Baha'i, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, or even Falun Gong. Their very existence calls into question the veracity of this claim.

Perhaps then the claim is a spiritual one, not historical. That is to say, it is not the final as in the last religion ever formed-rather it is the last one created that man will ever need. It is sufficient to connect the global brotherhood of humanity with God.

That could perhaps be the case logically. But here again the claim is asserted without justification.

6) "Islam is the shortest and broadest road that leads to God."

Again, are those the parameters for determining the one true religion? If so, then a discussion could ensue to both evaluate each worldview according to its length to get to God, and its broadness. I would not choose these parameters myself, but one could do so if he wished.

In conclusion, these six statements may perhaps encourage someone who is already Muslim, that their belief is the one true religion-providing further evidence of its internal consistency.

However, the above six claims seem to miss a fundamental distinction important when discussing and determining which

worldview among many is the one true worldview, or religion. This is the distinction between knowing and showing.

It is one thing to know a claim to be true. It is yet a different task to show that it is true.

When I teach worldviews as a lecture I conclude with four tests that can be administered to any given worldview and used as a measure to compare how each competing worldview holds up. These test for **correspondence, coherency, consistency,** and **comprehensiveness**.

The **correspondence** test asks how well does this worldview correspond with what I perceive of the world? How directly does it correspond with reality?

Islam's teaching God created the world makes sense to me. This explains beautifully why there is something rather than nothing. However, Islam does not provide a satisfying answer to man's greatest need.

Islam and Christianity agree that man is divided from God, separated. Both religions desire reunion with God. Islam teaches this is possible through submission. The Arabic word for Islam can also be translated "submission."

Christianity teaches that submission to God is impossible to do perfectly. Both Muslims and Christians would agree. Mankind is in a broken, fallen, sinful, imperfect state. Islam's answer to man's problem is essentially, try hard and hope God is merciful because sometimes He isn't. In that way Allah appears to me capricious.

Islam doesn't correspond to reality in a really important way. It provides no satisfying answer for what to do with Man's sin. It provides no means to reconcile imperfect men to a perfect, holy, and sovereign God.

Only the gospel provides that. This is why the gospel is such

good news. This is why the gospel is so important.

The second worldview analysis test is **coherency**. This test evaluates a worldview's logic. This test asks whether it is rational or reasonable. Does it pass the sniff test? Or does it seem patently off?

Islam doesn't fare well with this test when we examine its treatment of women. The Qur'an states that Allah is merciful. But if wives are disrespectful to their husband, according to Surah 4 husbands are allowed to withhold sex from them. The Qur'an even commands husbands to beat them.

In Saudi Arabia women could not drive for nearly two decades. They allowed it legally just a few years ago in 2019. Islam's track record with women is not coherent. How can one gender have so much more value than another if both are human creations under Allah? How can a husband be allowed to beat his wife-the one he's devoted his life to loving and protecting?

A third test for **consistency**, asks how consistent the tenets of this worldview are with themselves. Does this worldview contain contradictory teachings or beliefs?

Surah 109:6 regarding how to relate to disbelievers, "Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion." The Qur'an states many times that Allah is peaceful, merciful, and forgiving. How then can He justify the systematic killing of disbelievers as ordained in Jihad (surah 2:216)? Islam has a massive consistency problem. Is it a religion of peace or of the sword? The fact that an objective outside observer cannot tell is a serious consistency problem.

Lastly the **comprehensive** test asks the question, How well does this worldview explain everything altogether? It takes into consideration how well it answered the above three questions, and other important considerations.

For my final analysis I would bring in outside evidence. The evidence for the reliability of the Bible is absolutely unrivaled by any other book from antiquity, Qur'an included. The miracles recorded in the New Testament authenticate the authority of Jesus's teaching. The fulfillments of prophecy recorded in Scripture are incredible.

Muhammad's record of bringing peace to the Saudi peninsula in the 7th century is a sad tale of power, bloodshed, politics, and let's face it, hatred. When all the evidence is considered, Islam has problems with the worldview tests. Christianity raises difficult questions, but has really good, historically grounded, spiritually satisfying answers to all of them.

You might check out this excellent article on our website about worldviews. [probe.org/worldviews/]

You might also check out an excellent historical study, on our website, comparing the lives of Jesus and Muhammad. [probe.org/the-lives-of-muhammad-and-jesus/]

I hope this helps.

Paul Rutherford

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"I'm a Mormon and I Have

Questions about Your Article”

I read your article A Short Look at Six World Religions and it said that many of Joseph Smith’s prophecies never came true. Which prophecies are those?

I also read, “Both of these religions teach salvation by works, not God’s grace.” I have been a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 8 years of age, and I have always been taught that we are saved by the grace of God. However, salvation is not free. For example, if one chooses to not live the commandments that God has given, then how can he be worthy to live in the presence of God? Here is a quote from the Book of Mormon: “For we know that it is by grace that we are saved after all that we can do.” (page 99-100). Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins, but we must do our part to accept his atonement and live his commandments. Accepting his atonement is not enough. Through the grace of our loving Savior we can be redeemed from our sins and return to the presence of our Heavenly Father clean from all sin, again if we keep his commandments the best we know how. God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ are the perfect examples of mercy.

Have a good day and thank you for teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, who is my best friend.

Hello _____,

Jesus is my best friend too! <smile>

> *I read your A Short Look at Six World Religions and it said that many of Joseph Smith’s prophecies never came true. Which prophecies are those?*

I cited a few of them in a response to an e-mail about my article. Your question prompted me to add a link to that article at the end of the one you read, but here’s a direct link for you.

> *I also read, "Both of these religions teach salvation by works, not God's grace." I have been a member of the Chruch of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from 8 years of age, and I have always been taught that we are saved by the grace of God. However, salvation is not free.*

I would agree that salvation was not free for God, for whom it cost Him EVERYTHING. But it *is* a free gift for us. Please note Ephesians 2:8,9:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

This scripture is diametrically opposed to Mormon doctrine. We cannot do anything to contribute to our salvation. Isaiah 64:6 says that all our righteousness is as filthy rags; what can we possibly give to God that will overcome the heinous sin of requiring the death of His Son to be reconciled to Him? If someone came in here and murdered one of my sons and then said, "Hey, I don't want you to be mad at me. . . let me do something to help me get myself in your good graces. Here's a nickel. . ."—Well, guess what? That wouldn't work! And it doesn't work with God either.

_____, I pray the Lord will open your eyes to see that trying to earn salvation with our paltry efforts—even WITH His grace—is a slap in the face of our God. He wants us to come to Him with empty hands and the realization that we do not deserve and cannot earn the gift of eternal life that comes ONLY through trusting in the Lord Jesus.

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“I am a Christ-Believing Hindu”

I am a Hindu by birth. A Christ-believing Hindu (we will get to that a little later).

I was just reading your write up on “Do Hindus believe in Jesus.” And I am writing to thank you! Thank you for not calling Hinduism a religion creating by Satan as some do, for not outrightly dismissing our faith as pagan or evil. Thank you for the open mind with which you view Hinduism. And thank you for not considering Jesus a western God.

But the article talks about the Jesus of the Bible and the Jesus that the Hindu man believes in. Being a Jesus lover myself (don’t get me wrong, I mean I love Jesus absolutely, unconditionally, and like crazy, talk to Jesus 24/7 and try to listen to what He tells me), I can tell you that Jesus is God according to Hinduism as He could be according to Christianity. This is because Hinduism lets you choose your path to salvation. It lets you believe in any Ista of God or all of it. And I have chosen Jesus and His path to salvation.

And yes, my Jesus is the Jesus of the Bible. I read the Bible as often as I can. I was introduced to Jesus by the Bible and I know no other Jesus. There is nothing just nothing in the Bible that does not fit into the Hindu scheme of things. Yes, John 4:16 says Jesus only! But so does every scripture of Isha. Scriptures will tell man that following God/Jesus/Allah/Krishna is the only way of attaining God! This is because there is just One God. So there can be only one way. And that is to follow God.

It is important that people of God (I will happily claim that

I belong to the group) accept that there is just one God. Different people choose different ways to reach God. But so be it. As it is stated in Romans 14:4, who are we to judge another, it is before our master, that we stand or fall. Our Master is one. He is the same to a Muslim who believes in Allah, to a Christian who believes that Jesus is the only way to heaven, to an atheist and to a Christ believing Hindu who believes that loving Jesus is the awesomest thing ever.

Good day
Bless the Lord

First of all, let me thank you for contacting Probe Ministries with your thoughts on Jesus. We must confess that your letter was thought-provoking and deserves a reasonable response. Hence, let me point out few things to shed some light on few things mentioned in your letter.

I agree with you that we have no choice when it comes to our birth. However, we all have the privilege of making a choice on what to believe and what to reject.

Regarding your comment on Jesus, we agree that Jesus is "not a western God." In fact, Jesus, in his incarnation, was born in the Middle East. So, when it comes to region, He was more eastern than western. However, we must clarify that God, the Creator of the whole universe, is not limited to a region. He is not a foreigner or alien to any country or culture.

We are pleased to know that you have a loving relationship with Jesus. That is wonderful. We hope that this relationship will help you to listen to Him better and understand Him better and to follow Him better. In fact, Jesus said that "If you love me, you will obey my commands" (John 14:15).

While we respect your freedom to believe in Jesus or not to believe in Jesus, we want to point out a couple of things that Jesus taught. The first thing to keep in mind is that the information about Jesus as God is available only in the

writings of the disciples of Christ. Hindu literature does not speak about Jesus. In the writings of the disciples of Jesus, it is made very clear that Jesus made some exclusive claims. For example, Jesus claimed “I am the way, the truth and the life.” The definite articles in these claims make it clear that they are exclusive claims. He also claimed that “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The Bible is unambiguous in making exclusive claims. Exclusive claims of truth are logical. Truth by definition is exclusive—truth excludes what is false. It is from this kind of a worldview that the followers of Jesus, who loved him, believed His claim that He is the only way to the Father and therefore the only Savior of the world (Acts 4:12).

We agree with you that there is only one God. On the other hand, if there is only one God, it is reasonable for us to leave it to God to decide how many ways are there to reach Him. In fact, you might have heard of a religion known as Satanism. It will be injustice to the followers of Satan if we claim that their religion will lead to God. Don’t they have a right to pick their destination? Won’t it be cruel to them if we or God refuse them their right to follow someone other than God? If God has given that freedom to men, let us respect that freedom.

We agree with you that we do not have to judge others. And we do not. Jesus will be the judge during the final judgment. We just believe Jesus’ claim that He is the only way to the Father, and teach that belief, as an expression of our faith in Christ and as a response to His love shown to us on the cross. In fact, if there were another way for mankind to be saved, the death of Christ was futile or meaningless. We hope that you will find meaning in the death of Christ on the cross for you and me and will show your love to Jesus by believing in His claims. For a factual belief in Jesus, read the writings about Him and His teachings recorded by His direct disciples who saw His death and witnessed His resurrection and

ascension. If you really love Jesus, you will believe His claims and obey them. I am sure that you do not want to love someone who taught wrong things, right? Jesus was either right in making those claims, or he was a liar or lunatic (to die for those claims). You must make a choice!

Rajesh Sebastian

Grace and peace of God be with one and all. Thank you for considering my mail and send such a beautiful reply.

Just two things. One, Lord Jesus Christ has been mentioned in the Hindu scriptures. So has Noah, Adam and Eve. Besides I see no reason why the holy Bible would not qualify as a Hindu scripture.

And second, Mr. Rajesh spoke about the option to choose your destination. If there can be two destinations, can't there be two paths to a destination?? Why did the holy Bible give us the laws but later God blessed us with the Grace through Lord Jesus Christ? That's two paths, right? And accepting that Jesus Christ is the path does not mean that we deny the laws.

Lastly, the very thought of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ going meaningless sends a chill down my spine. For He has done so much for me and to save me. But trust me, as long as all the sheep get home safely, my Shepherd will be glad. That's all that matters to my Savior.

May the Grace of Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Happy Sabbath.

Greetings in the name of the Saviour.

You brought up some interesting topics for discussion. Let me quickly respond to a couple of them that might be beneficial to you.

You mentioned that “Lord Jesus Christ has been mentioned in the Hindu scriptures. So has Noah, Adam and Eve.”

You are right. It is true that Bhavishyapurana mentions the names you have mentioned above. However, there is nothing to wonder about that. It also mentioned the names of Muhammad, Sankaracharya, Babar, Akbar, East India Company, Queen Victoria etc. Guess the date of its composition!

As mentioned to you earlier, let me repeat that the only source of reliable information for the teachings of Jesus Christ are from the writings of the disciples who gave their life for following those teachings. Almost all of them were killed for their faith in Christ by followers of various religion. St. Thomas was killed in India.

You also stated that “Besides I see no reason why the holy Bible would not qualify as a Hindu scripture.”

On the other hand, will you have a problem if Hindu Scriptures are considered as Islamic or Christian or Jewish? Each religion and their texts present different and competing worldviews to people. They are mutually exclusive. While Christianity believes in One personal God, Hinduism offers One non-personal Brahman (Nirguna Brahman) as the ultimate reality. Both views can not be right at the same time in the same sense.

Regarding your question “Can’t there be two paths to a destination?” We would prefer to say that it is for God to decide how many ways are there to reach Him. We also believe that, if there were another way, the death of Christ would have been unnecessary. Moreover, what God has revealed to us in the Bible is that there is only one way to Christ. Jesus and the writers of Bible are unambiguous about it.

Regarding your comment on law and grace, let me clarify that Bible clearly teaches that the giving of the law and the sending of Christ were both actions of grace. While the law was helpful in preventing sin, it was not enough to save sinners. So, as planned in advance and promised in advance, Christ came to make the sufficient incarnation and sacrifice once and for all so that whole mankind can be forgiven through his sacrifice. Law is never presented as a path of salvation in the Bible.

As you wrote, we hope that you will find your trust in the True Shepherd and Savior. He is the way, the Truth and the Life.

Rajesh Sebastian

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“I Think Some of the Indian Gods Are Aliens From Ancient Visits to Earth”

I think we’re not alone in the universe because of lots of old evidence of aliens found on Earth. I’m an Indian, there are (traditionally 330 million!) gods and goddesses in Hindu culture. I’m always confused about whom to pray. In Indian culture I heard about the flying machine that our gods used at that time and also heard that our ancestors found all the planets in our solar system thousand years ago that scientists came to know with the help of modern technology. I think thousand of years ago aliens visited India, and it may be some

of the Indian gods are aliens. So there is a possibility that they exist in the universe.

You brought up an interesting and relevant issue worth discussing. People talk a lot about alien beings these days. The Bible also speaks about aliens. In the Biblical language, they are called angels, spirits, cherubim, etc. The Bible also speaks about their interactions with human beings at different times in the history of mankind.

All through the history, without geographical and cultural limits, mankind has been making scientific discoveries based on research methods available to us. Such scientific advantages have been made by people of different cultures and nationalities in different part of the world. India is one of them. However, to assume that they were revelations will be making a giant leap. This will undermine the foundational principles of science, which is observation and research. The Bible teaches about seeking and finding. Those who seek find solutions in spite of what their culture and nationality is. Fictions will always predict possibilities. There is no wonder when a fiction speaks about flying objects or beings. There are other examples in history where people wrote about flying objects before man actually made airplanes.

The Bible teaches that there is only One God who deserves worship and prayer. This one God created everything else in the world. Therefore, God is not an alien to any culture of country. He is the Master and Creator of the whole universe. In fact belief in many gods will fall on its own feet when you ask a couple of questions—who created god "D," who created god "C," who created god "B," and you will end up in an absolute One. That is the One we call God and who deserves your worship and prayer.

Rajesh Sebastian

Posted March 2014

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"What Do You Know About Landmark Forum?"

What do you know about Landmark Forum? Received an e-mail from a relative about how this has changed her life and invited me to check it out. I came straight to your website to see if you had anything on this organization.

We haven't done any research ourselves on The Landmark Forum, but others have:

"Landmark Education" on Apologetics Index (note the very beginning of this analysis: "NOTE: (Landmark Education lawyers, pay attention please!)" The litigious nature of Landmark is quite interesting! Note this corollary article:

Landmark Education vs. A Link on Apologetics Index

Inside the Landmark Forum

Watchman Fellowship, a trustworthy source of information on cults and false religions, took down their analysis of Landmark after being threatened with a lawsuit. However, someone else has put it back up: web.archive.org/web/19980615070001/http://www.watchman.org/LandmarkProfile.htm

If you google Landmark Forum, you can find some intriguing information, including comments by people who have attended and/or experienced pressure from recruiters.

ask.metafilter.com/15619/Opinions-of-Landmark-Forum

www.ex-cult.org/Groups/Landmark/landmark-cherries.dir/_XOOM/apostate/ index.htm

For what it's worth, Landmark uses experiential exercises rooted in its history of Werner Erhard's "est" program, which eventually morphed into Landmark. Some of the exercises themselves are helpful and do not violate any biblical principles. Dr. Phil McGraw, formerly associated with Pathways, a similar program to Landmark, brought TV cameras into the "training room" of some of these same exercises when he was featured on Oprah, and periodically uses elements of the exercises on his programs.

And several Christians have taken the helpful parts of Landmark, rejected the rest, and created God-honoring, people-honoring seminars that are about discipleship and personal growth, not making money.

www.heartconnexion.org (my son and I both participated in this one, and bless God for it)

www.graceadventure.org/

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"What's the Difference Between Reiki and the

Biblical Practice of Laying On of Hands?”

I’m researching Reiki and found a website that purports to be “Christian Reiki.” The woman who does this says she only connects with the Holy Spirit inside of her for the energy she uses. She commits each session to God and communicates with the Holy Spirit by means of prayer during the session. She further states that the Reiki symbols she uses to deliver that energy actually have no meaning but that they act as focus points for transmission of energy. I would tend to be a little leery about this but want to know, how does this differ from the Christian “laying on of hands”?

Yes; I think this does differ from the Christian “laying on of hands” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Christians lay hands on a brother or sister in Christ as an act of identification. They identify with another believer who is part of the body of Christ. When we then pray for that individual’s healing, there is no attempt to channel “energy” of some sort to bring the person healing. Rather, we simply make a request that God would heal the person if it is His will to do so. Sometimes He is willing; sometimes not. But this is a choice for God; we are simply making a request, subject to His will.

There just isn’t any biblical warrant for “Christian” Reiki, so far as I can see. We are never commanded (or even encouraged) to channel spiritual “energy” for the healing of others. Indeed, I think the biblical authors would regard such a practice as highly suspect. We are simply encouraged to pray for their healing. And this is something we can do (and that the church has always done) without any assistance from the practice of Reiki.

In this respect I don't see what "Christian Reiki" adds to the equation (that isn't accomplished simply through prayer to God). If the Reiki practitioner thinks that Reiki gives them power or authority over the Holy Spirit, then such a belief is totally absurd and unbiblical. God is sovereign and is not in any way subject to the will and manipulation of men. So it seems to me that Reiki is a questionable practice for Christians, that adds nothing to simple prayer, and that is possibly grounded in some very unbiblical beliefs about God and healing, etc.

At any rate, that's my view of the matter.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"You Shouldn't Dis the Mormons Unless You're a Member"

I think religion is great! I don't however see why we have to dis other people. We are all children of God and here trying to get back to Him. I hate it when I see all these sites talking bad about the Mormons. They aren't bad people, they just believe a little different. I think it's kinda cool the things they do, like work in their temples for people that have passed on. In the Bible it says that we need to be baptized to enter into heaven and what if someone didn't get

the chance, they can still be saved because of the Mormons beliefs. It also talks about baptisms for the dead in Peter, so it is scriptural. I also had a thought. Are you guys Active Members in Full Fellowship of the Mormon Church? If not why are you talking about the Mormons? It's like this, If you have a Ford Explorer and it has a very serious electrical problem that requires specific dealer attention, are you going to take it to a BMW Dealer…. I personally don't feel that is very Christ-like talking bad about other religions whomever it may be. Why don't we focus on our own churches and magnify our own beliefs and our own salvation [rather] than attack other religions that are trying to do good acording to what they know. Why can't we all just love our neighbors like Jesus Christ says? Whata ya say.

We certainly aspire to love our neighbors as Jesus commanded. But being loving and gracious does not exclude truth telling. In fact, ignoring the issue of truth is not very loving at all. If we believe that someone is in danger it would be cruel not to inform them. Certainly, we are to do this with gentleness and respect as Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:15-16, but we are still responsible for sharing the truth in love. Jesus warned that there would be false prophets, and that they would be dangerous (see passages below). The danger is that people might be deceived into trusting a gospel that is not capable of saving them. The price for being deceived is steep: spending eternity separated from God.

Actually it is the Mormons who first charged that all of traditional Christianity is apostate. The message that Joseph Smith supposedly received from the divine figures in his first vision is that all the denominations and teachers at that time were an abomination to God. Mormons claim that they are restoring the true gospel that was lost a short time after Christ. There is a long tradition within Christianity, going back to the first generation after the birth of the church, to defend itself against new gospels and new messiahs. Defending

biblical Christianity against the claims of Mormonism is the responsibility of everyone who claims the Christ of the Bible as their savior.

Although tolerance has come to mean that we are to hold all ideas equal, that is not what the word means. To tolerate someone you must first disagree with them, otherwise there would be no need to be tolerant. A tolerant individual gives someone he disagrees with an opportunity to make their case, to convince them that their view is correct. After meeting with Mormon bishops for over four years I feel that I have been tolerant and will continue to do so in the future.

Sincerely,

Don Closson

False Prophets – Matthew 7:15-23 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

False Christs – Matthew 24:5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

False Gospels – Galatians 1:8 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!

False Gods – Exodus 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before me."

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"Does the Bible Talk About Reincarnation?"

Does the Bible ever talk about reincarnation?

The short answer is "No; the Bible nowhere speaks of reincarnation." Unfortunately, however, some people have claimed to find evidence for this belief in the Bible. For example, John the Baptist is often claimed to be the reincarnation of Elijah.

This is a popular "New Age" sort of interpretation. Of course, no respected biblical scholar would accept this interpretation as true.

And it certainly wasn't the view of Jesus, His disciples, John the Baptist, or the Gospel writers. Luke 1:17 tells us that John came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, which is far different than asserting that John was the reincarnation of Elijah. In addition, it's important to remember that Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus, Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. But as Geisler and Rhodes observe, "Since John [the Baptist] had already lived and died by then, and since Elijah still had the same name and self-consciousness, Elijah had obviously not been reincarnated as John the Baptist." Third, we must remember that Elijah never died (2 Kings 2:11); therefore, he doesn't fit the reincarnation

model.

An important verse to bear in mind in these discussions is Hebrews 9:27. This verse teaches us that we die once, and then face God's judgment. The consequences of that judgment, according to the Bible, are eternal—not temporal (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10-15).

If you would like more information about this subject, please see the following two resources on Probe's website:

1. The Mystery of Reincarnation — www.probe.org/the-mystery-of-reincarnation/

2. "Was Reincarnation Ever in the Bible?" — www.probe.org/was-reincarnation-ever-in-the-bible/

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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"Islamic History Says Abraham Spoke Arabic"

Islamic history shows that prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) spoke Arabic. What would you say to that sir? Not or possible? Or not sure?

I would be surprised if Islamic history seriously says such a thing. I would carefully check your sources and make sure the source you are relying on is a reputable, scholarly source.

At any rate, I do not think it possible that Abraham spoke Arabic. Arabic appears to go back only about as far as the 4th

century A.D. or so. See, for example:

1) http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Arabic?o=100074

2) http://www.arabic-language.org/arabic/history.asp.

Since Abraham lived about 2000 B.C., this would be about 2,400 years before the earliest known examples of written Arabic. I don't think it likely that a 2,400 year gap can be bridged in this case. And, of course, biblically speaking, there is no evidence at all for such an assertion.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

"Arabic: a Semitic language that developed out of the language of the Arabians of the time of Muhammad, now spoken in countries of the Middle East and North Africa."

The above is from one of the links you posted. This is false—Arabic was used before prophet Muhammad.

Yes; I would agree that the language dates to before the time of Muhammad. But as I said, the evidence seems to point to the 4th century A.D. (before Muhammad, but long after Abraham, who lived around 2000 B.C.).

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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