Embraced by the Light of Deception - A Christian Critique

Former Probe staffer Russ Wise shows that Betty Eadie’s best-selling book Embraced by the Light is a combination of biblical images and spiritual deception.

The Popularity of Betty Eadie’s Book

A growing number of Christians are embracing the light of Betty Eadie, the author of *Embraced by the Light*. Ms. Eadie’s book, along with several other new-age bestsellers, are influencing the Christian church in a negative way.

The bestseller, *Embraced by the Light*, is one that needs to be dealt with. It has been on the *New York Times* Bestseller List for over a year now and has sold more than two million copies thus far.

Betty Eadie is a woman on a mission and her mission is to introduce the “Jesus” she met in her near-death experience to as many people as she can. She has been on a variety of national television programs and hundreds of local programs. According to her publicist she has spoken in a significant number of churches, and Christians make up a large portion of those who purchase the book. That is scary.

Ms. Eadie has become somewhat of a guru for many. When she was in Dallas in February, 1994, the *Dallas Morning News* carried a lead story expressing the adoration of her new-found followers. One woman said that Ms. Eadie gave her a kind of inner peace and that without it she would have lost her mind. Another woman said that she cried all the way through the book the first time she read it. A man said that the book validated a lot of things he had believed and that he now looks at things differently.

According to the *Dallas Morning News* article the book’s greatest appeal “stems from the description of eternal life, a comforting notion for people who have survived a loved one or for those pondering their own fate.”

The popularity of Betty Eadie and her book *Embraced by the Light* in Christians’ lives raises some important questions for us to ask ourselves. Why is her message so readily accepted by Christians? How has the church failed in its mission, thereby creating an atmosphere where such heresy could flourish?

Ms. Eadie says that she was shown in the spirit world that we were with God in the beginning and that we helped him to create the earth. She tells us that Eve’s “initiative” made it possible for mankind to have children, that sin is not our true nature, and that we are inherently divine.

She continues by saying that we are all God’s children and that we are here on earth to learn the lessons we need for our own spiritual evolution. Our key lesson is to remember our divinity and return to heaven. Eadie embraces the idea that all religions and faiths are equal in God’s sight and that they are essential in our development. Likewise, spirits from the other side will also help us learn the lessons of life and aid in our progress.

Ms. Eadie says that death is a spiritual “rebirth” as we simply make a “transition” to another state of being. There will be no judgement day and we will judge ourselves regarding our spiritual evolution.
Mormonism and Magic

She also teaches that we choose the illnesses that we would suffer and that some would choose the illness that would end their lives. She further teaches that hell is not forever and that because of “love,” in the end, all will be saved.

Before we can fully understand Ms. Eadie’s worldview and theology it is important for us to recognize that she is a Mormon and has been exposed to new age paganism. She has, in fact, been a member in good standing of the Mormon Church for the past fifteen years or more.

Betty Eadie’s background is a mixture of native American Indian spirituality, Catholicism, and Mormonism. Her mother was a full-blooded Sioux Indian and as a young child Betty attended a Catholic boarding school.

This spiritual syncretism helps us recognize the source of her close encounter with “the Light.” As we take a closer look at her new-found belief system we are able to not only see Mormon ideas but beliefs that are found in the occult.

On page 57 of her book Betty tells the reader, “within our universe are both positive and negative energies, and both types of energies are essential to creation and growth. These energies have intelligence—they do our will. They are willing servants.”

You may remember “The Force” of Star Wars and its “light” and “dark” side. The Force was both “good” and “evil.” One simply chose which side of “The Force” one wanted to utilize for his evolutionary development. There was no “right” or “wrong” choice; it was a matter of personal preference.

The Force is similar to “magic.” In the occult world magic has a “good” side and an “evil” side. It is also considered to have a “light” side and a “dark” side.

Magic is an attempt by man to gain equality with God. To become a part of the creative process. God spoke the universe into existence by His word. The magician, sorcerer, or witch attempts to speak things into existence by words based on their occult knowledge.

The Christian desires to obey the will of God, not to force God to do his bidding. This is the essential difference between occult practice, magic, and Christianity.

Another example of Ms. Eadie’s new age belief is the account of her being in a garden while she had her out-of-body experience (OBE). She saw a rose and was struck by its beauty and as she looked at it she felt that she had become “one” with it. She states on page 81 of her book, “I felt God in the plant, in me, his love pouring into us. We were all one!”

“At-one-ment” or the interconnectedness of all things is a primary tenet of new age thought and philosophy. Betty Eadie, through her OBE, experienced the greatest deception Lucifer plays on humanity—that we are a part of the divine, that we are indeed deity. The idea that we are divine beings opens our understanding that we have all that we need “within” us to progress toward our full potential as a god or goddess.

Our “looking” or “going” within is an attempt to discover our inner allies and gain “deep” learning so we further evolve mentally and spiritually. These allies or inner teachers, helpers, or guides are available to all of us, according to the new age mystics.

This inner teacher is also known as the “Higher Self” or the “True Self” and is in constant battle with
our cognitive or conscious self. The focus of knowledge is transferred from the objective and cognitive to the subjective and intuitive or experiential. *It is my contention that the greatest danger Betty Eadie represents for the Christian is that Truth is based on or in experience rather than the Word of God.*

**Betty Eadie’s View of Jesus**

Ms. Eadie believes that the "Jesus" she met during her OBE was the "real" word of God and not a book that has been corrupted over the millennia. Perhaps some of the most disturbing aspects of her book is what is left out rather than the deception within.

Betty Eadie never mentions the crucifixion or the atonement for sin. In her worldview they simply are not needed. According to her belief we are at-one with God. Likewise, she never mentions the cross of Christ; evidently her “Jesus” is too positive to mention something as negative as the cross or the need of redemption.

There is no mention of evil or victory over sin. There is no resurrection. Ms. Eadie is almost evangelistic in her declaration that “all religions upon the earth are necessary because there are people who need what they teach. People in one religion may not have a complete understanding of the Lord’s gospel and never will have while in that religion.” (see Gal. 1:8 and 2 Cor. 11:13 along with Matt. 24:24)

Eadie continues by saying “as an individual raises his level of understanding about God and his own eternal progress, he might feel disconnected with the teachings of his present church and seek a different philosophy or religion to fill that void. When this occurs he has reached another level of understanding and will long for further truth and knowledge.”

She says, “Having received this knowledge, I knew that we have no right to criticize any church or religion in any way. They are all precious and important in his sight.”

Another concern of Ms. Eadie’s is her unbiblical teaching regarding the person of Jesus. On page 44 of her book Ms. Eadie recounts her meeting the Jesus of her out-of-body-experience:

> I understood that he was the Son of God, though he himself was also a God, and that he had chosen from before the creation of the world to be our Savior.

Ms. Eadie’s statement regarding the person of Jesus is legitimate with the exception of one word that causes us to think of how the Jehovah Witnesses translate John 1:1. The article “a” becomes very important when it precedes “God.” However, for Ms. Eadie the use of the article “a” indicates that she views Jesus as another distinct deity rather than the second person of a triune god—thereby exposing her Mormon understanding of the trinity. The Mormons believe in three separate beings who are each divine rather than three persons comprising one God as the Bible indicates.

The Bible is explicit in its affirmation of the Trinity. Deuteronomy 6:4 is clear in its declaration of one God. Elsewhere in Scripture we see God the Father (Matthew 6:9), God the Son (John 1:1), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) as three distinct Persons who are equal in every aspect of their being.

In John 10:30 Jesus says that He is one with the Father, thereby leaving no doubt of their oneness regarding their essence and that they are not two separate beings or gods as Ms. Eadie would have us believe. Ms. Eadie refers to “the Spirit of God,” although she does not mention the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity by name. The Bible, likewise, is clear regarding the stature of the Holy
Spirit. In John 14:26 the Holy Spirit is seen as the enabler in helping God’s people understand divine truth.

Betty Eadie’s view of Jesus comes into focus once Biblical light is shed upon it. It becomes perfectly clear that she does not hold a trinitarian view of God.

**Deception of New Age Religion**

The unsettling message that Betty Eadie offers in her book is that we are not sinners needing redemption, but that we are spiritual beings who have lost our way. We have forgotten our divinity. Spiritual growth is a progressive process toward self-realization and at-one-ment.

The new-age worldview of Betty Eadie is evident:

- All is One
- All is God
- Man is God
- All is changing
- Man is changing
- All is relative
- Self is the Judge
- The gospel is unnecessary

Ms. Eadie sounds like Shirley MacLaine, the popular new age entertainer and author, when she says that her prior existence “had been purposely blocked from me by a ‘veil’ of forgetfulness at my birth.” Ms. MacLaine had previously made the same statement in her popular book *Out on a Limb*.

In other words, we were with our heavenly Father in the spirit world and eventually came to the point where we were spiritually dry and realized that the only way to get beyond our dryness was to jump start our spirituality. Thereby, we chose to leave our heavenly home and incarnate on this earth where we might further develop our spiritual essence and advance our possibilities in the spirit world.

Ms. Eadie states that prior to our leaving our spiritual home and incarnating in this world we perfected a plan for growth before we took on this physical shell. She says on page 47 of her book that “the Father explained that coming to earth for a time would further our spiritual growth. Each spirit who was to come to earth assisted in planning the conditions on earth, including the laws of mortality which would govern us.”

In the spirit world Ms. Eadie was told “that we had all desired to come here, that we had actually chosen many of our weaknesses and difficult situations in our lives so that we could grow.” She continues by saying, “to my surprise I saw that most of us had selected the illnesses we would suffer, and for some, the illness that would end our lives . . . we were very willing, even anxious, as spirits to accept all of our ailments, illnesses, and accidents here to help better ourselves spiritually.”

According to Betty Eadie we are basically good. On page 49 of her book Ms. Eadie says “that sin is not our true nature. Spiritually, we are at various degrees of light—which is knowledge—and because of our divine spiritual nature we are filled with the desire to do good.” She continues by saying “that there is a vital, dynamic link between the spirit world and mortality, and that we need the spirits on the other side for our progression.”

In the above statement Ms. Eadie is allowing her god’s eclectic worldview show. The idea that man
is basically “good” is commonly held in the field of humanistic psychology rather than in Christian Scripture. The Bible indicates that man is in need of redemption and forgiveness. Her belief that we, in the mortal world, are in need of the spirits from the other side to aid us in our spiritual progression is taken directly from her Mormon background. We find this teaching in the Doctrine and Covenants (128:15), one of the Standard Works of the Mormon Church.

The Biblical indication is that in the last days many will be deceived. The gospel writer of Matthew seems to agree. Not only will unbelievers be deceived but also those who have trusted Jesus for their salvation may be equally deceived. The Scripture says, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:36) The problem that many have in our day is that they seek “signs” and “wonders” rather than Jesus. Experience has become their teacher rather than the Word. Our response is simply, Jesus—the only begotten Son of God. There is salvation in no other. Our hope is not in our experiences, but in a person.

Testing the Book by The Bible

Betty Eadie exposes more of her Mormon worldview with her belief in a pre-mortal existence. When Ms. Eadie first speaks of “Jesus” in her book she said “I knew that I had known him from the beginning, from long before my earth life, because my spirit remembered him.” Another example of her “new found” belief in a pre-existence was when “Jesus” allowed her to recall her feelings when creation occurred. She says that “all people as spirits in the pre-mortal world took part in the creation of the earth.”

Ms. Eadie offers another example. She relates an experience during her heavenly visitation where she “traveled to many other worlds—earths like our own but more glorious, and always filled with loving, intelligent people.” She continues by saying, “I knew that I had been to these places before.” She had an experience that she could not deny.

Some have said that a man with an argument is always at the mercy of a man with an experience. A growing problem in our society is the willingness to accept one’s experience over the protestation of the facts. As Christians we need to be careful that we do not fall into this trap. Our responsibility is to consider the Word of God and allow it to validate the experience or not. We must be extremely careful not to allow our or anyone else’s experience to mold our belief system.

Another example of Ms. Eadie’s pre-mortal experience was an encounter with those in the spirit world. She said, “I saw again the spirits who had not yet come to earth, and I saw some of them hovering over people in mortality. I saw one male spirit trying to get a mortal man and woman together on earth—his future parents.” (I had a brief moment of deja vu and thought of Marty McFly in Back to the Future).

A growing number of Christians are accepting Ms. Eadie’s account of the after-life, and the church is allowing her beliefs to take root by their lack of biblical teaching. The Bible is very clear regarding the individual’s moment of existence (Psalm 139:13-16). Nowhere in Scripture does our Lord offer a possibility that we pre-existed with Him in the spirit world. The burden of proof is on the one with the experience and not the objective Word of God.

What can we learn from Betty Eadie and her near-death experience? First and foremost is that near-death experiences tend to alter one’s worldview. Raymond Moody in his book The Light Beyond offers evidence for such a concern. He states that those who experience a near-death episode...
established by most churches. They come to realize through this experience that religion is not a matter of one ‘right’ group versus several ‘wrong’ groups. People who undergo an NDE come out of it saying that religion concerns your ability to love—not doctrine and denominations. In short, they think that God is a much more magnanimous being than they previously thought, and that denominations don’t count.

This idea, that doctrine is of no importance but we should only be concerned about love, is parallel to the teachings found in the New Age worldview. Ms. Eadie is in agreement with Dr. Moody’s statement that “love” is our ultimate goal and that religion is simply a vehicle to get us to the party. It makes little or no difference whether we get there in a Ford or a Chevrolet. As warm and cozy as this idea sounds, it does not take into account the words of our Lord in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Jesus was very clear that He wasn’t offering one of many ways, but that He was The Way and The Truth. He was very confident that salvation was found in no other.

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Mormon Beliefs About the Bible and Salvation - Attacking Salvation through Christ’s Grace

Russ Wise helps us understand Mormon beliefs from a Christian worldview perspective. He looks at their core teachings on the Bible and salvation and demonstrates their inconsistency with the truths of Christianity. He concludes that Joseph Smith attempted to strip Jesus Christ of His fundamental gift to humanity—salvation through grace.

The Foundational Vision of Joseph Smith

Mormonism has become America’s most successful home-grown religion. An Examines Mormon doctrine about the Bible, Mormon scriptures, and salvation. April 1987 news brief in the Dallas Morning News reveals a nine percent rise in the conversion rate to Mormonism. The Mormon church boasts a four million membership in the United States and 6.2 million members worldwide. In fact, the Mormon church is doubling in size every ten years. It took 117 years for the Mormon church to reach one million members and a short five years to add a fourth million to its membership.

Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon church in 1830, declared that he was chosen by God to restore true Christianity to human kind. Think about it, Christianity was lost after the death of the last disciple; and Joseph Smith, a young man fourteen years of age would be used by God to restore the lost truths of Christianity. The young prophet was not greeted by enthusiasm but received ridicule instead.

Brigham Young, the successor to Joseph Smith said this about Mormonism: “I say to the whole world, receive the truth, no matter who presents it to you. Take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter-day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test.” {1}
According to Spencer W. Kimball, the past president of the church, the goal of the Mormon church is to bring light into the world and the charge to convert the people of the world to accept the truth. He stated: “This is what we want—the total membership of all the world as indicated by the Lord.” {2} The Latter-day Saints are not only interested in converting the living to their truth but the dead as well.

In the mid 1820’s a great revival broke out in the Methodist Church in upstate New York and quickly spread to the Baptist and Presbyterian churches. As a new convert, young Joseph was confused as to which church he should join. Because of his unrest he went into the woods to pray for God’s guidance in the matter. It was there that he saw a vision that set a new course for his life and millions of others. However, this foundation block has been rehewn over the years.

There are no less than nine versions of this one vision. There are three versions given by Joseph Smith himself. The first version was dictated by Joseph Smith in 1838 and published in 1842. It stated that he was fourteen years of age, that God and Jesus had appeared to him and told him that all churches were wrong. {3} Another version was dictated with portions in Joseph Smith’s handwriting in 1831 or 1832. It stated that he was sixteen years of age, that Jesus had appeared and that by searching the Bible, he had found that all religions were wrong.

It’s amazing to me, and I suppose you, too, that these accounts—as divergent as they are—could lend credibility to young Joseph’s vision. If you were a witness of a crime and gave views as different as these, one would question your presence at the event.

Prophet David O. McKay says that: “The appearing of the Father and the Son to Joseph Smith is the foundation of this church.” {4} I find it ludicrous that so many would place their faith on such a shaky foundation. Jesus called Peter the rock and that on that rock he would build his church.

**Sources of Mormon Doctrine**

The Book of Mormon is believed by Mormons to be the “fullness of the everlasting gospel.” {5} If this is true, then why so many additions to it?

Mormon doctrine is primarily received by the Prophet of the church. The Prophet Ezra Taft Benson, spoke at Brigham Young University on February 26, 1980. During his remarks he gave the current teaching regarding the absolute authority of this high office. He stated: “Keep your eye on the President of the church. If he ever tells you to do anything, and it is wrong, and you do it, the Lord will bless you for it.”

The Living Prophet is the first line of authority for the Mormons. The present Prophet can overturn any prior teaching of a past Prophet, including that of Joseph Smith. Brigham Young said that (paraphrased) when compared with the living Prophet, the Bible, the Book of Mormon and other standard works of the church are nothing to him. They do not convey the word of God as does the Prophet.

President Joseph Fielding Smith declared that at every General Conference of the church the speakers are giving forth scripture that is equal to anything in the Bible or the Book of Mormon.

To contrast the teaching of this evolutionary prophet, the Bible tells us that God is an unchanging God. Malachi 3:6 says: “For I the Lord do not change...” God’s character does not change; He is the same yesterday, today and forever; nor does he change his mind.”

The second source of authority for the Mormon is the Doctrine and Covenants and was written after
the Book of Mormon. The Doctrine and Covenants contains revelations received by Joseph Smith after the publication of the Book of Mormon. For the Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants has authority over the Book of Mormon since it reveals “latter-day“ truth. It’s interesting to note that there are a large number of contradictions between the two.

*The History of Joseph Smith*, another source of authority, states this regarding the Book of Mormon: “He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates. . ., he also said that the fullness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the saviour to the ancient inhabitants.”{6}

Let me underscore the phrase “the fullness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it.” If we can allow the English language to speak for itself, I think one would have to agree that what Joseph Smith is saying here is that the Book of Mormon is the full presentation of the everlasting gospel—that God has “said it all”—right here. If this is true, then the prophet has shot himself in the foot. Where, then, lies the authority for the Doctrine and Covenants and the other standard works of the Mormon church?

The Pearl of Great Price is made up of three books: The Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham and the writings of Joseph Smith.

The Book of Abraham is unique in that it was translated much the same way as the Book of Mormon. The Book of Abraham was translated from some ancient records from the catacombs of Egypt. Joseph Smith believed these records to be written by Abraham’s own hand and called it “The Book of Abraham.”

To shed light on the veracity of Joseph Smith’s translation, three well-known Egyptologists were allowed to give independent translations of the papyri. Each one, independent of the other, came to the same astonishing conclusion. The Book of Abraham, as translated by Joseph Smith, was a farce. He had taken one proper name and translated it into some 85 words with eleven proper names. Joseph Smith did not get even one word correct in the whole translation. However, the manuscript was plagiarized from the Egyptian “Book of Breathings.”

It is hard to reach any other conclusion than that Joseph Smith’s explanations were products of his creative imagination. If, in fact, Joseph Smith’s credibility concerning these sources is faulty, then can we dare assume that the balance of his teaching represents the truth?

**Why Mormons Reject the Bible**

Mormonism has become America’s most successful home-grown religion; but are they the only true church, as they believe?

The Mormons insist that they do not reject the Bible—in fact, you might have seen their missionaries use the Bible. However, they consider it only partially complete.

The *Church News*, a Mormon newspaper, carried this statement concerning the Bible: “It is the Word of God. It is not perfect. The prophet Joseph made many corrections in it.”{7}

The Book of Mormon echoes this idea in First Nephi 13:26: “... a great and abominable church which is most abominable above all other churches; for behold, they have taken away from the gospel of the lamb many parts which are plain and most precious...”

To better understand the Mormon disregard for the Bible, we need to be aware of how they view the Christian church. The apostle Orson Pratt, in his book *The Seer* says this about the Christian
community: “Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the ‘whore of Babylon’ whom the Lord denounces by the mouth of John the Revelator as having corrupted all the earth by their fornications and wickedness.” {8}

The Mormon church views the Christian pastor or priest as a hireling of Satan. But where did Joseph Smith get this idea?

Shortly after the religious awakening in upstate New York, Joseph Smith had a vision. In the vision he asked God which Christian church he should join. Joseph Smith writes in The Pearl of Great Price: “I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight.” {9}

I believe that one could safely say that Joseph Smith considered the Christian church to be a false church. Because of this basic premise, the logical conclusion would be, if the church is false, then the source of its doctrine—the Bible—must be false as well. Therefore, one can better understand the motivation behind the eighth article of faith of the Mormon church: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly.”

Joseph Smith has, in effect, set the stage whereby he can rewrite the Bible, {10} or add to it, to establish his personal theology. The Mormon church believes that Joseph Smith is God’s instrument to bring about His truth, in its entire fullness.

Whenever this attitude toward Christianity and the Bible prevails, the individual is drawn away from the Bible and to the writings of Joseph Smith and the Mormon church. Orson Pratt said: “No one can tell whether even one verse of either the Old or New Testament conveys the ideas of the original author.”

An attempt at credibility is given the Book of Mormon by Joseph Smith in Volume Four of the History of the Church where he says; “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.” {11}

In essence, Joseph Smith has attempted to strip the Bible of its authority and place that authority upon the Book of Mormon and the standard works of the Mormon church.

The Bible speaks for itself. We find in scripture that God’s word will stand forever (Isaiah 40:8), that it will never pass away even though heaven and earth will someday pass away (Matthew 24:35).

According to 2 Timothy 3:16, the Bible is inspired by God; and 2 Peter 1:20 indicates that all scripture was written by men moved by the Holy Spirit.

God’s word has withstood critics, skeptics, and others who have sought to destroy it.

**Mormon Doctrine**

“As man is, God once was. As God is, man can become.” Is it possible that we, too, can become like God, that we can become God?

A chief source of doctrine for the Mormon church has been the book titled *Mormon Doctrine* {12} by the late Bruce R. McConkie. However, there are those who strongly disagree with him. The problem is simply this: McConkie contended that the true source of authority for the church is the standard works which include The Holy Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.
The presidents of the church, however, have attempted to establish themselves as the final authority of the church on doctrinal matters. McConkie gives us a glimpse of the primary teachings of the church. First is the belief that, “As man is, God once was. As God is, man can become.” The Mormon church teaches that God was once a man and that he progressed to godhood. So for the Mormon, the good news is that you too can become as God. In contrast, the Bible clearly teaches that God has been God from everlasting to everlasting (Ps. 90:2).

Another belief is that individuals have to learn how to become gods themselves. The road to godhood is paved with good works, and the responsibility is squarely on the shoulders of the individual.

Another belief that has received much attention is that godhood is not for men only, but for men and women together. This doctrine has spawned the teaching that God originally intended for man and woman to be joined together throughout all eternity—that the marriage covenant was to extend beyond death. The Mormon church further teaches that the practice of marrying “until death do you part” did not originate with the Lord or his servants, but is a man made doctrine. This system of holy matrimony, involving covenants as to time and eternity, is known distinctively as “celestial marriage”—the order of marriage that exists in the celestial worlds.

The apostle James E. Talmage, in his book The Articles of Faith, says this about those who may aspire to such a marriage: “The ordinance of celestial marriage is permitted to those members of the church only who are adjudged worthy of participation in the special blessings of the House of the Lord...” The use of the word “worthy” is another indication of the works orientation of the Mormon Church.

The Bible plainly teaches in Matthew 22:30 that in the resurrection men and women are no longer given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

The fourth doctrine we will look at is: God is a resurrected man. This doctrine puts forth the idea once again that God was once a man who discovered his personal godhood and elevated himself to become a god.

Joseph Smith says: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s.” But he contradicts himself in the Book of Mormon; in Alma 31:15 he writes: “Holy, holy God; we believe that thou art God, we believe...that thou wast a spirit, and that thou art a spirit, and that thou wilt be a spirit forever.” At this point Joseph is agreeing with the Bible, for we find in John 4 that “God is a spirit.”

The problem of inconsistency arises for the Mormon church, when Joseph Smith contradicts himself between the Book of Mormon and the other standard works of the church—inconsistencies which point to the man-made nature of the religion. On the other hand, the Holy Bible is unique in that it has incredible unity in its message, even though it was written over a span of sixteen hundred years.

Josh McDowell, a defender of the Bible, writes: “Biblical authors wrote on hundreds of controversial subjects with harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: ‘God’s redemption of man.’" The Mormon Plan of Salvation

The Mormon church teaches that it is the only hope for salvation. If this is true, then why did Jesus suffer on the cross?
For many in this world, salvation is truly a slippery slope. Oftentimes the problem is that one does not really know if he possesses it or not. One of the greatest barriers to realizing our position in Christ is that we do not have a clear understanding of the gospel. To understand the Mormon church’s teaching regarding salvation we must first realize what it believes the gospel to be.

By definition the Mormon church teaches that the gospel is the Mormon church system and its doctrine. The church and its doctrine becomes the good news—their gospel.

For the Christian it’s not an organization but a Person who represents the gospel, and that Person is God’s only begotten son, Jesus Christ. It is the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ that embodies the gospel for the true Christian. Jesus is man’s savior. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the only way to God the Father.

By contrast, Brigham Young says: “No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial Kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph. . . .” “He reigns there as supreme a being in his sphere, capacity, and calling as God does in heaven.” So for the Mormon, Joseph Smith has become the savior.

Volume One of Doctrines of Salvation says this about Joseph Smith: “No salvation without accepting Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was verily a prophet, and if he told the truth...then this knowledge is of the most vital importance to the entire world. No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.”

The Mormon church teaches that all men will receive a degree of salvation and that there is no place known as hell. By incorporating this doctrine into the church, they have attempted to undercut the explicit teachings of the Bible. Furthermore, the church teaches that it ALONE is the only hope for salvation. Bruce McConkie, the Mormon scholar, says this regarding salvation: “If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside of the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Many Mormons who may no longer fully believe the church’s teachings find themselves in a dilemma. They have been so persuaded that only the Mormon church offers a hope for salvation that they lose all hope for ever obtaining it. To better understand this instruction, we need to recognize the twofold approach to salvation taught in the Mormon church.

First, is general salvation. Grace comes to the Mormon by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, and there is no need for obedience to the Mormon church and its doctrine or gospel law. However, to obtain individual salvation one must meet the conditions set by the church. For the Mormon, this salvation, called “eternal life,” means godhood.

For the most part, the Mormon has never clearly understood the gospel of Jesus Christ because his church has so distorted Christian teaching. The outcome of this distortion is that Joseph Smith has stripped Jesus of His gift to mankind and he, Joseph, has taken the rightful place of our Lord and Savior. The Bible simply teaches that man must humble himself and receive the work Jesus did for him at the cross. Romans 10:9 put it this way: “...if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Notes

Hinduism: A Christian Perspective

Rick Rood gives us an understanding of this major world religion which is becoming more a part of the American scene with the growth of a Hindu immigrant population. Taking a biblical worldview perspective, he highlights the major differences between Hinduism and Christianity.

Though Hinduism may seem far removed from our everyday experience, it’s becoming increasingly important that we as Christians understand this mysterious religion from India. This is so, if for no other reason than that Hinduism claims 1/6 of the world’s population, with over 750 million followers worldwide. But it’s also important because its influence is being felt more and more in our own country.
Most of us have had at least some exposure to what has become known as the New Age movement. If so, we have probably realized that Hinduism is the wellspring of a good deal of New Age thinking. Most of us are probably also aware than an increasing number of Asian Indians are residing in the U.S. We may be surprised, in fact, to learn that there are approximately 200 Hindu temples or Hindu centers in the U.S. Many believe that due to its eclectic nature, Hinduism has the potential to serve as a major vehicle for uniting much of the non-Christian religious world.

The appeal of Hinduism to Western culture is not difficult to comprehend. For one, Hinduism is comfortable with evolutionary thinking. As modern science emphasizes our physical evolution, so Hinduism emphasizes our spiritual evolution. As much of modern psychology emphasizes the basic goodness and unlimited potential of human nature, so Hinduism emphasizes man’s essential divinity. As modern philosophy emphasizes the relativity of all truth claims, so Hinduism tolerates many seemingly contradictory religious beliefs. As a religion that also emphasizes the primacy of the spiritual over material reality, Hinduism appeals to many who are disillusioned with strictly material pursuits.

Though there are some core beliefs common to virtually all Hindus, there really is no “Hindu orthodoxy”—no hard and fast dogma that all Hindus must believe. It’s actually a family of gradually developing beliefs and practices.

Hinduism has its roots in the interrelationship of two basic religious systems: that of the ancient civilization residing in the Indus River Valley from the third millennium B.C., and the religious beliefs brought to India by the Aryan people (possibly from the Baltic region) who began infiltrating the Indus Valley sometime after 2000 B.C.

The religion of the Aryans is described in the writings of “holy men” contained in the Vedas (meaning “knowledge” or “wisdom”). The Vedas are four collections of writings composed between about 1500 and 500 B.C., which form the basis for Hindu beliefs, and which reveal a gradual development of religious ideas. The later sections of the Vedas are known as the Upanishads. These Vedic writings are considered inspired. Later Hindu writings, including the renowned Bhagavad Gita, are of lesser authority, but widely popular.

**Hindu Beliefs About God And the World**

An understanding of the Hindu beliefs about God is important even if we don’t know any Hindus or people from India because we are all in contact with the New Age movement, and it draws its ideas about God from Hinduism. What then do Hindus believe about God?

The early portions of the Hindu scriptures known as the Vedas describe a number of deities who for the most part are personifications of natural phenomena, such as storms and fire. Prayers and sacrifices were offered to these gods. An extensive system of priestly rituals and sacrifices was eventually developed which served as means of obtaining the blessing of these gods.

The later portions of the Vedas, called the Upanishads, reflect a significant development in Hinduism’s concept of the divine. Many of the Upanishads, instead of speaking of a multitude of gods, refer to an ultimate reality beyond our comprehension called Brahman. Though Brahman is impersonal in nature, it is sometimes referred to in personal terms by the name Isvara.

Along with this idea of a single divine reality, the Upanishads also teach that at the core of our being (referred to as “Atman”) we are identical with this ultimate reality.

A popular saying in Hinduism is “Atman is Brahman!” In fact, all living things are Brahman at their
innermost core! In addition, instead of ritual sacrifice, intuitive knowledge of the oneness of all things came to be endorsed as the way of contact with divine reality. Also found in the Upanishads is the teaching that the material world (including our conscious personalities) is less than fully real. The word “maya” is used to designate the power by which God, or ultimate reality, brought this less than real world into existence.

Though this monistic or pantheistic philosophy provided a comprehensive intellectual understanding of the divine reality for Hindus, it lacked a strong appeal to the heart. As a result, just before the dawn of the Christian era, a great transformation occurred in Hinduism, spurred particularly by the writing of the Bhagavad Gita, the “New Testament” of Hinduism. The Gita records a conversation between the warrior-prince Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna (who is unveiled as an incarnation of the god Vishnu), in which personal devotion to deity is endorsed as a way of salvation for all classes of people.

From this time forward, these two major streams of Hindu thought and practice grew and developed—the more intellectual and philosophical stream that emphasized the oneness of all things, and the stream that emphasized personal devotion to a god. The latter stream has predominated among the common people of India to this present day. Chief among the gods so venerated are Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). In India there are many temples devoted to Shiva (or to one of his “wives,” such as Kali), or to Vishnu (or to one of his ten incarnations known as avatars). All in all, it is often stated that Hinduism claims 330 million gods and goddesses!

One might wonder how such a multitude of beliefs about the divine could possibly co-exist in one religion. But they do. There is, however, a widespread recognition that none of the personal gods of Hinduism is in any way exclusive or unique. They are all simply different ways of conceiving of the one reality behind all things—Brahman.

**Foundational Hindu Beliefs**

Next we must turn our attention to two core beliefs of Hindus: (a) what they believe about the source of evil and suffering and (b) what they believe about life after death.

The first of these core beliefs is the doctrine of karma. The word karma means “action.” But the religious concept has more to do with the results or consequences of actions. The doctrine of karma states that every thought and action results in certain consequences born by the actor or thinker. If a person lies or steals, he will be wronged in some way in the future. Hindus believe that all suffering is due to one’s own past actions, in this or in a previous life. Some believe that karma implies strict determinism or fatalism (that one must simply resign himself to living out his karma). Most, however, believe that though our present is determined by our past, nonetheless we can influence our future by conducting ourselves in a proper manner in the present.

Some have equated the doctrine of karma with the statement in Galatians 6:7 that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” It is certainly a biblical teaching that our actions have consequences—for good or ill. But this is not the same as believing that every experience in life is a consequence of one’s own past actions. This is definitely not a biblical idea.

The second core belief of Hinduism is the doctrine of reincarnation, or transmigration of souls, called samsara. Since it is impossible that all of one’s karma be experienced in one lifetime, the Hindu scriptures state that after death individual souls are “reborn” in this world, in another body—human or otherwise. The nature of one’s rebirth is determined by the karma resulting from past actions.
Closely associated with the doctrine of reincarnation is that of *ahimsa* or non-injury to living things. This is the core moral value of Hinduism, the protection of all life (which is ultimately divine), and is the main reason why some Hindus are vegetarian.

Also associated with reincarnation is the *caste system*. According to Hindu teaching, there are four basic castes or social classes (and thousands of sub-groups within the castes). Each has its own rules and obligations pertaining to nearly every facet of life. At the top are the Brahmins or priests. Second in rank are the Kshatriyas or warriors and rulers. Third are the Vaisyas or merchants and farmers. Below these are the Shudras or laboring class. Salvation is possible only for the top three castes, who are called the “twice born.” Outside the caste system are the untouchables or outcastes. Though outlawed in India in the late 1940s, many in the countryside are still considered outcastes.

One’s caste is determined at birth by his or her own personal karma. Attempts, therefore, to bring about social change or to improve one’s social position would appear to run contrary to the law of karma and the caste system.

It’s little wonder that the chief aim of the Hindu is to experience release or liberation from this cycle of death and rebirth caused by karma. Hindus call this liberation *moksha*.

**Hindu Ways Of Salvation**

Why do New Agers practice yoga? Why are they so devoted to meditation? It may come as some surprise that these practices are central to the Hindu search for salvation!

We noted earlier that the chief aim in Hinduism is to gain release from the cycle of reincarnation caused by karma—the consequences of past actions, in this or in previous lives! Now we want to look at the primary ways in which followers of Hinduism seek to achieve this salvation—liberation from earthly existence.

Before discussing the three primary ways of salvation in Hinduism, we must mention the four goals of life permissible to Hindus. Hinduism recognizes that in the course of many lifetimes people may legitimately give themselves to any of these goals. The first is the goal of pleasure or enjoyment, particularly through love and sexual desire. This is called *kama*. The second legitimate aim in life is for wealth and success. This is called *artha*. The third aim in life is moral duty or *dharma*. One who gives himself to dharma renounces personal pleasure and power, to seek the common good. The final aim in life, however, is *moksha*—liberation from the cycle of lives in this material world, and entrance into Nirvana.

Hindus recognize three possible paths to moksha, or salvation. The first is the way of works or *karma yoga*. This is a very popular way of salvation and lays emphasis on the idea that liberation may be obtained by fulfilling one’s familial and social duties thereby overcoming the weight of bad karma one has accrued. The Code of Manu lists many of these rules. Most important among them are certain rituals conducted at various stages of life.

The second way of salvation is the way of knowledge or *jnana yoga*. The basic premise of the way of knowledge is that the cause of our bondage to the cycle of rebirths in this world is ignorance or *avidya*. According to the predominant view among those committed to this way, our ignorance consists of the mistaken belief that we are individual selves and not one with the ultimate divine reality called Brahman. It is this ignorance that gives rise to our bad actions which result in bad karma. Salvation is achieved through attaining a state of consciousness in which we realize our identity with Brahman. This is achieved through deep meditation, often as a part of the discipline of yoga.
The third and final way of salvation is the way of devotion or *bhakti yoga*. This is the way most favored by the common people of India; it satisfies the longing for a more emotional and personal approach to religion. It is self-surrender to one of the many personal gods and goddesses of Hinduism. Such devotion is expressed through acts of worship, *puja*, at the temple, in the home, through participation in the many festivals in honor of such gods, and through pilgrimages to one of the numerous holy sites in India. In the way of devotion, the focus is one obtaining the mercy and help of a god in finding release from the cycle of reincarnation. Some Hindus conceive of ultimate salvation as absorption into the one divine reality, with all loss of individual existence. Others conceive of it as heavenly existence in adoration of the personal God.

**A Christian Response to Hinduism**

The editor of the periodical *Hinduism Today* said not long ago that a “small army of yoga missionaries” has been trained to “set upon the Western world.” And in his own words, “They may not call themselves Hindu, but Hindus know where yoga came from and where it goes.”

What should be the appropriate Christian perspective on this religion of the East that is making such an impact in the West? At the outset we must say that as Christians we concur with Hindus on a couple of points. Hindus are correct in their recognition that all is not right with the world and with human existence in it. They are correct as well in suggesting that the ultimate remedy to the human dilemma is spiritual in nature. Beyond these two points, however, there’s little common ground between Hinduism and Christianity. Let’s note just a few of the more important areas of divergence.

First, Hinduism lacks any understanding that God created this world for a good purpose. It is common for Hindus to speak of God bringing the universe into existence simply as a “playful” exercise of His power. Also lacking is a conception of God as infinitely holy and righteous and as the One to whom we as His creatures are accountable for the way we conduct our lives.

The second major area of contrast between Hinduism and Christianity is the conception of human nature and of the source of our estrangement from God. According to Hindu teaching, man is divine at the core of his being. He is one with God! The problem is that man is ignorant of this fact. He is deceived by his focus on this temporal and material world, and this ignorance gives rise to acts that result in bad karma and traps us in the cycle of reincarnation.

According to the biblical teaching, however, the source of our alienation from God (and ultimately of all that is imperfect in this world), is not ignorance of our divinity, but our sinful rebellion against God and His purpose for our lives.

This leads to the third and final point of contrast—the way of salvation. According to most Hindu teaching, salvation from the cycle of reincarnation is achieved by our own efforts—whether through good works, meditation, or devotion to a deity. According to the Bible, however, our spiritual need is for deliverance from God’s judgment on our sin and for restoration to a life under His direction and care. This salvation can be provided only by God’s gracious and undeserved action in our behalf.

It is true that in certain Hindu groups there is a similar emphasis on God’s grace (probably as a result of past Christian influence). But even here, there is a major distinction. The Hindu teaching about grace sees no need for an atonement for sin, but simply offers forgiveness without any satisfaction of the judgment on sin required by a holy God.

In contrast, the Christian gospel is this: God the Son became a man, died a sacrificial death on the cross, making real forgiveness of real sins against the real God possible to those who place complete trust in Christ. All who do so can experience true forgiveness, know God and His purpose for their
lives, and have the certainty of eternal life with Him!

For a list of resources on Hinduism, and on sharing the gospel with our Hindu friends, contact us here at Probe!
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What is Islam? - And a Christian Response

It’s not every day that religion appears as a front page story in today’s newspapers, particularly on a regular basis. But over the past 20 years one religion has made the front page perhaps more than any other . . . the religion of Islam. Islam claims up to one billion followers worldwide. It is not only the fastest growing religion in the world, but its influence touches virtually every area of life—not only the spiritual, but the political and economic as well. What is more, its influence is being felt closer and closer to home. There are now up to 5 million Muslims in the U.S., and over 1,100 mosques or Islamic centers.

What does Islam teach? How are the teachings of Islam similar to those of Christianity? How are they different? What should our attitude be toward Islam, and toward those who follow this powerful religion? These are some of the questions we want to address in this essay.

The History of Islam

First, we want to take a look back at the history of Islam. Islam was founded in the early seventh century by Muhammed. When he was 40 years of age, in A.D. 610, Muhammed claimed to be receiving messages from God. These messages were later compiled and recorded in the Koran—Islam’s holy book.

About this same time, Muhammed began preaching against the greed, economic oppression, and idolatry that plagued the Arab peoples. He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities. Though his message was initially rejected, by the year 630 he had succeeded in gaining control of Mecca, the economic and religious center of the Arabian peninsula.

Though Muhammed died two years later, the religious/political movement he founded rapidly spread throughout the Arab world, and far beyond. By A.D. 750, the Muslim empire spanned from Spain in the west to India in the east. In the centuries that followed, Islam penetrated deeper into Africa and Asia, extending as far as the Philippines. During its “golden era” Islam claimed some of the world’s finest philosophers and mathematicians. It was during this time also that Islam and Christianity clashed as a result of the Crusades to reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims.

Beginning around 1500, and accelerating after the industrial revolution of the 1700-1800s, Islam felt the increasing influence of the European powers. Eventually, large portions of the Muslim world were colonized by European countries. This political and economic domination by Europe continued until the end of WWII, after which Muslim countries began to attain political independence. With the discovery and development of the vast oil reserves in many Muslim lands, economic independence suddenly came within reach also. At last, Islam had in its grasp both the opportunity and the resources to reassert itself as a powerful force in the world. After being on the defensive for many
centuries, Islam was now on the offensive!

**The Current Status of Islam**

At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it’s important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. Though all Muslims draw their inspiration from Muhammed and the Koran, there are many identifiable groups and movements within Islam.

The most obvious division is that between Sunni and Shia Islam. The Sunnis (who compose about 90% of all Muslims) draw their name from the fact that they look both to the Koran and to the “sunna” in establishing proper Muslim conduct. The “sunna” is the behavior or example of Muhammed and of the early Muslim community. Of course, there are many sub-divisions among the Sunnis, but they all identify themselves as Sunni.

The other major group of Muslims are the Shi’ites (who compose about 10% of all Muslims and reside mainly in Iraq and Iran). The word Shi’ite means “partisan,” and refers to the fact that Shi’ites are “partisans of Ali.” Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammed and one of the early Caliphs or successors to Muhammed as leader of the Muslim people. Shi’ites believe that the leader of Islam should be among the descendants of Ali, whom they believe possess a special divine anointing for this task. The last of these divinely appointed leaders, or “imams” most Shi’ites believe to be in “hiding” in another realm of existence. The Ayatollah Khomeini was believed to have been a spokesman for this “hidden imam.”

A third group that should be mentioned are the Sufis—those Muslims (among both Sunni and Shia) who seek a mystical experience of God, rather than a merely intellectual knowledge of Him, and who also are given to a number of superstitious practices.

In addition to these divisions within Islam, mention must also be made of attitudes among Muslims toward their contact with the Western world in modern times. Though the situation is much more complex than we are capable of dealing with in this pamphlet, two broad trends have been evident within Islam.

One trend is toward some degree of accommodation and adjustment to the West and to modern ways of life. This has manifested itself most obviously in countries like Turkey, which have instituted largely secular forms of government and Western ways of life, while maintaining Islamic religious practices.

The opposite trend is toward a return to a more traditional approach to Islamic life and a rejection of Western and modern ways. The most extreme expression of this trend is manifest in the various forms of Islamic fundamentalism, which insist on the implementation of Muslim law (called the Sharia) in every area of life. Fundamentalists have been most successful in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan; but they are active in virtually every Muslim country, at times resorting to violence and terrorism in attempting to implement their agenda.

In understanding this potent religious and political movement, it is important to understand the various divisions and attitudes within Islam and the basic beliefs at Islam’s core.

**The Basic Beliefs of Islam**

Though the beliefs of Muslims worldwide are about as diverse as those among Christians, there are six basic articles of faith common to nearly all Muslims.
The first of these is that there is no God but Allah. The pre-Islamic Arabs were polytheists. But Muhammed succeeded in leading them to devote themselves solely to the chief God of the pantheon whom they called Allah (which simply means God). To worship or attribute deity to any other being is considered *shirk* or blasphemy. The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power.

The second article of faith is belief in angels and jinn. Jinn are spirit beings capable of both good and evil actions and of possessing human beings. Above the jinn in rank are the angels of God. Two of them are believed to accompany every Muslim, one on the right to record his good deeds, and one on the left to record his evil deeds.

The third article is belief in God’s holy books, 104 of which are referred to in the Koran. Chief among these are the Law given to Moses, the Psalms given to David, the Gospel (or Injil) given to Jesus, and the Koran given to Muhammed. Each of these is conceived to have communicated the same basic message of God’s will to man. Obvious discrepancies between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and the Koran (particularly with reference to Jesus and Muhammed) were accounted for by Muhammed in his suggestion that the Bible had been tampered with by Jews and Christians.

The fourth article of faith is belief in God’s prophets, through whom Allah appealed to man to follow His will as revealed in His holy books. There is no agreement as to how many prophets there have been—some say hundreds of thousands. Among them were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. But all agree that Muhammed was God’s final and supreme prophet—the “seal” of the prophets. Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshiping him.

The fifth article of faith is belief in the absolute predestining will of Allah. Though some Muslims have modified this doctrine somewhat, the Koran seems to support the idea that all things (both good and evil) are the direct result of God’s will. Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so.

The sixth and final article of faith is belief in the resurrection and final judgment. At the end of history, God will judge the works of all men. Those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will enter into paradise (pictured in rather sensual terms). The rest will be consigned to hell. The paramount feature of Islamic belief, aside from its strong monotheism, is that it is a religion of human works. One’s position with regard to Allah is determined by his success in keeping His laws.

**The Basic Practices of Islam**

Now we want to focus on the most important of those works. These are summarized in what are usually called the “Five Pillars of Islam.”

The first pillar is recitation of the creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet.” It is commonly held that to recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses is to constitute oneself a Muslim—one in submission to God. Of course, the word Islam simply means “submission.”

The second pillar is the regular practice of prayers. Sunni Muslims are required to recite specific prayers accompanied by prescribed motions five times daily. (Shi’ites do so only three times a day.) All male Muslims are also enjoined to meet for community prayer (and sermon) each Friday at noon.

The third pillar is almsgiving. Born an orphan himself, Muhammed was deeply concerned for the needy. The Koran requires that 2.5% of one’s income be given to the poor or to the spread of Islam.
The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast during the month of Ramadan (the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar, during which Muhammed is said to have received the first of his revelations from God, and during which he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina). During this month, Muslims in good health are required to forego all food and liquid during daylight hours. This fast promotes the Muslim’s self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.

The fifth pillar is the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. If possible, every Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life. It can be made properly only on a few days during the last month of the Muslim year. The Hajj promotes the ideas of worldwide unity and equality among Muslims. But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin.

A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means “exertion” or “struggle” in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or “holy war.” The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!

Muslims around the world look to these pillars for guidance in shaping their religious practice. But in addition to these pillars, there are numerous laws and traditions contained in the Hadith—literature that was compiled after the completion of the Koran, that reportedly contains the example and statements of Muhammed on many topics. Because the laws of the Hadith and Koran cover virtually every area of life, Islam has well been referred to as an all-encompassing way of life, as well as a religion.

A Christian Perspective on Islam

At this point it is appropriate to offer a brief evaluation of Islam from a Christian perspective.

At the outset, it must be stated that there is much in Islam that the Christian can affirm. Among the most significant Islamic doctrines that can be genuinely affirmed by the Christian are its belief in one God, its recognition of Jesus as the virgin born, sinless prophet and messiah of God, and its expectation of a future resurrection and judgment.

There are, however, some very significant areas of difference. We will mention just a few. First, the Muslim perception of God is by no means the same as that revealed in the Bible. Islam portrays God as ultimately unknowable. In fact, in the Koran, Allah reveals His will, but He never reveals Himself. Neither is He ever portrayed as a Father to His people, as He is in the Bible.

Second, though Jesus is presented as a miracle working prophet and messiah, and even without sin, Islam denies that He is the Son of God or Savior of the world. Indeed, it is denied that Jesus ever died at all, least of all for the sins of the world.

Third, though mankind is depicted as weak and prone to error, Islam denies that man is a sinner by nature and in need of a Savior, as the Bible so clearly teaches. People are capable of submitting to God’s laws and meriting his ultimate approval. According to Islam, man’s spiritual need is not for a savior but for guidance.

This leads to the fact that since in Islam, acceptance by God is something we must earn by our works, it cannot possibly provide the sense of security that can be found in the grace of God as taught in the Bible.

Many of us will find opportunities to befriend Muslim neighbors, co-workers, or friends. As we do, we should be aware of some of the barriers that exist between Muslims and Christians, due to past
and current animosities.

The attitude of many Muslims toward Christianity and toward the West is colored by the history of conflict that has found expression in the Crusades of Medieval times, European domination and colonialism, as well as Western support for Zionism in most recent times. We must allow the love of God to overcome our own fear and defensiveness and to penetrate these barriers.

In the past several years many Muslims have been deeply impressed by the compassion shown by Westerners (and particularly the United States) toward Muslim countries that have endured severe hardship. This kind of compassion can be shown on an individual level as well. As we do, we can then invite our Muslim friends to join us in a study of the New Testament, which reveals the only source of acceptance before God in His love and grace, expressed through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ and His gift of the Holy Spirit.

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**Satanism: The World of the Occult - A Christian View of Demonic Worship**

Russ Wise provides a good understanding of why people are attracted to a negative sounding practice: the worship of Satan. Looking at this issue from a biblical worldview, he presents information on how God can free people who have bought into this lie. From a Christian perspective, we don’t need to fear them but instead stand ready to offer them the deliverance found only in Jesus Christ.

[Webservant’s Note: Since this article was written in 1994, a “new face” of Satanism has emerged, consisting of pagans and atheists who claim to not believe in Satan yet who have appropriated the name “Satanist” for themselves. Many of these young “neo-Satanists” (to coin a phrase) deny the concepts of good and evil, worship themselves, and take great offense at articles like this that describe a Satanic-oriented description of their chosen set of beliefs.

Nonetheless, we believe Russ Wise’s original article is still worth offering because of the high numbers of people drawn into the openly occult practices described herein.]

**The Growing Problem**

The occult is on the rise; many young people are seeking their spiritual identity through Satanism.

Satanism has become an issue of great concern in our society. It is a phenomena that crosses the city limits into the rural areas of our nation. Satanism is not just a big city problem. The news wires carry story after story about young children being kidnapped, only to be found later as victims of some bizarre ritualistic crime. To help us gain a balanced perspective of the subject, C. S. Lewis in his book *Screwtape Letters*, says this about Satan:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an unhealthy interest in them.
They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

As satanic involvement among our youth increases, we begin to see the primary goal of such activity. It has become clear, according to the data thus far analyzed by those who investigate satanic involvement, that the primary goal is to alter people’s values and turn them against themselves, their beliefs, family, God, and society.

When we begin to take a close look at the occult, it becomes necessary to define terms. There is a great difference between cults and the occult. The term cult refers to a group of people polarized around one individual who is often a magnetic personality. This individual has his or her own understanding of truth, who God is, man’s relationship to God, the existence of heaven and hell, as well as a number of other issues of faith. In most cases such individuals incorporate some degree of biblical truth into their teachings in order to gain a certain amount of credibility and in order to deceive the unwary.

The term occult means “hidden” or those things or teachings that are “unknown” or secret. So, the occult is the seeking after knowledge of unknown information, knowledge that is gained beyond the five senses. Therefore, knowledge is received by some supernatural involvement or connection.

Anton LaVey of the First Church of Satan in San Francisco, California, says that Satanism is a blatantly selfish, brutal religion. It is based on the belief that man is inherently a selfish, violent creature... that the earth will be ruled by those who fight to win.

Satanism challenges the biblical teaching regarding man’s relationship to others. We are to esteem others better than ourselves, and we are to be team players. In 1 Corinthians we read about being a part of the body of Christ, whereas, Satanism esteems the “self” over others.

Young satanists believe that the strong will rule with Satan. Once they are sufficiently involved, they often make a pact with Satan. They commit themselves to a future date when they will take their own lives by suicide. They believe that if they submit themselves to Satan in death, they will come back in another life as a stronger being and rule with him forever. According to recent statistics, fourteen young people a day take their own lives. A major concern for those who uphold a Judeo-Christian worldview is that this generation is becoming detached and is losing all sense of morality. Many have lost their mooring. It is imperative for the church, as a corporate body, and we as individuals, to share the message that Jesus Christ is the only possible solution to our emotional and spiritual needs.

The Power that Entices

Power has become an obsession with young satanists. It is sought after on the physical, mental, and spiritual levels. According to one former occultist, the greatest lure into the occult is “power” and “knowledge.” Not just corporate power but personal power. Gaining knowledge that others do not possess is another aspect of the occult. When an individuals have more knowledge it affords them a degree of power over those who do not have access to that knowledge.

Likewise, Satanism offers its lure to the youth in our society. Drugs and sex have become the bait that so often ensnare the unsuspecting.

With the increase of satanic activity, a profile of those involved in Satanism has emerged. They are generally from a white, middle to upper-middle class family. In most cases they are bright and do
well in school; however, they are often bored and are not challenged to meet their full potential. They tend to have a low self-worth and are unable to distinguish between right and wrong because of their relative ethical system. They often have problems in the home and in relating to other people around them. They use drugs and are sexually promiscuous. It is a rare occasion when these last two elements are not present in the mix.

Abuse, both physically and emotionally, is another aspect of this mix. Young satanists are often abused children who know no other way to relate to people. Some are a part of a multi-generational family involved in worshiping Satan as savior.

Anton LaVey, Satanist High Priest of the First Church of Satan in San Francisco gives us a glimpse of how Satan is seen in his book *The Satanic Bible*:

> We hold Satan as a symbolic personal savior, who takes care of mundane, fleshly, carnal things. Satan has attempted to usurp the place of Christ in redeeming mankind. He has endeavored to establish himself as a god who is equal to or greater than Jehovah and in a sense render God ineffective. LaVey goes on to say that “God exists as a universal force, a balancing factor in nature, too impersonal to care one whit whether we live or die.”

Therefore, the Judeo-Christian God is inaccessible and has no compassion. Thus, Satan becomes the solution to man's deepest needs.

Satanism leads one into bondage through mind control and fear, whereas Christianity allows the individual the freedom of choice. We have the opportunity to either accept God’s free gift of life or reject Him and simply exist separate from God’s love.

**An Agent of Change**

Music has always been at the center of the youth culture. The problem arises when the lyrics promote aberrant behavior. The Night Stalker, Richard Ramirez of Los Angeles, believed that Satan made him invincible. Police say the style of the brutal rapes and 16 murders Ramirez committed resembled the lyrics of the song “Night Prowler” on AC/DC’s LP “Highway to Hell.”

Along with Ramirez' fascination with AC/DC, he used cocaine and PCP in conjunction with a deep interest in Satan worship. He believed that Satan would protect him and not allow harm to come to him. According to a *People* magazine article as long ago as September 1985,

> Rock ‘n roll is turning too often to sex, Satanism, drugs and violence for its major themes and corrupting the values and views of unwary young people.

The lyrics of the last few years of the 1980s have continued on a downward slope. Rachel Matthews, an artist and repertoire representative for Capitol Records, recruits new groups for her company. Her comments regarding a newly signed band reveal what she, as one individual representing the music industry, is looking for in a band:

> I was just going, ‘Oh (expletive)! I’ve never heard anything like this!’ I’ve heard plenty of metal and speed metal, but it was just so intense and out of control, just like this caged psychosis going on. I loved it, because you could actually understand the lyrics. And even if they’re morbid and gruesome, it’s really cool that you could understand what they’re saying. It just makes it twice as evil. I like that." (*Dallas Life Magazine*, 1 July 1988)

The demo that interested Ms. Matthews in the group contained songs like “Die in Pain” and
The music that causes the greatest concern is the various types of “metal” music. Metal has been classified into three types. First, is party metal, and it represents the most popular style of music. Groups like Bon Jovi, Motley Crue, and Def Leppard are representative of party metal. They tend to glorify sexuality and the party spirit.

The second type is “thrash metal” represented by groups like Metallica, Anthrax, and Megadeth. The primary focus of “thrash metal” is violence and death.

The third type is known as “black metal” and is overtly satanic. The lyrics encourage such activities as incest, necrophilia, rape, torture, and human sacrifice. Black metal is represented by groups like Venom and Slayer.

King Diamond is perhaps the most satanic of all “black metal” groups. He openly professes Satan and incorporates a large amount of satanic activity into his performances.

Music has always been an agent of change in our society. It tends to shape the moral attitudes of each generation. As Christians we should be especially concerned about the lyrics in the music of the youth culture. We cannot afford to allow another generation to become polluted with the immoral themes found in today’s music. As parents it is imperative that we maintain open communication lines with our young people. Without open communication it becomes improbable that we can affect the listening habits of our children. Second, we cannot be hypocritical in our personal listening habits. Third, we need to become familiar with the type of music our children listen to and be willing to acknowledge the good and be prepared to positively criticize that which is not appropriate within our household.

Last, we as parents need to recognize that if our child is involved in rebellious music, we must attempt to understand what unmet need in his life is being met by his musical diet.

Galatians 5:19-21 says that

The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery . . . those who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, it is imperative for us as adults and youth to only listen to and think upon those lyrics that would honor God and His principles.

The Games of Destruction

Satan has used a number of tools over the centuries to ensnare the naive. The Ouija Board has proven to be particularly useful. According to the Dictionary of Mysticism the Ouija Board is “an instrument for communication with the spirits of the dead.” The Ouija Board is an open door into the world of the occult and demonic activity. Disembodied spirits speak to the living through the medium of the Ouija Board. This information is believed to be truth from the other side and is not recognized for what it is: Lucifer’s delusion to gain our allegiance.

Jane Roberts, the author of *The Seth Material*, relates her story regarding the Ouija Board. She was about to write a book on ESP, and to stimulate her thoughts, she and her husband used a Ouija Board to gain perspective. After a few sessions they were able to receive messages from someone who later identified himself as Seth. The use of the Ouija Board and the gradual, but ever-growing, influence of Seth in Jane’s life brought her to the point of possession. Her mind would enter a trance state and a deep male voice would begin to speak, indicating he had a message to get across to our
world the wisdom that it was only now ready for. Over a period of ten years Seth produced through Jane over 5000 typewritten records of alleged higher esoteric truth. Then Seth tried to kill her. Though she had not previously believed in demons, this experience changed her mind.

Internationally-known observer of the occult, Kurt Koch, says that by the use of the Ouija Board revelations from the past and predictions about the future are made.

Edmond Gruss tells us in his book _Cults and the Occult in the Age of Aquarius_ that there have been “many cases of ‘possession’ after a period of Ouija Board use.” Supernatural contact is commonly made through use of the board and has become a primary tool of Satan in reaching young people.

The Rev. Donald Page of the Christian Spiritualist Church reports that most possession cases he has dealt with are people who have used the Ouija Board. Francoise Strachan’s book, _A Company of Devils_, states that the Ouija Board is “one of the easiest and quickest ways to become possessed.”

The greatest danger of the Ouija Board is that an individual begins to place his trust and future hope in the message the board brings. As a Christian our only source of revelation regarding future things is to be God’s Word. We are to look to Jesus Christ and His teachings to properly understand our problems and seek a solution. Deuteronomy 18 tells us to beware of mediums and those who practice divination.

1 Chronicles 10 tells the story of Saul who was unfaithful to the Lord and consulted a medium, seeking guidance and did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore, the Lord slew him and turned the Kingdom over to David.

Christians can offer several reasons as to why one should not be involved in the use of the Ouija Board. One is simply that the Bible condemns it as being involvement in the occult (Leviticus 19:31, 20:6). Another relates to the tragic experiences of those who have been involved with this medium. And then there’s the fact that the messages received are often false and misleading. They are often obscene and contrary to biblical teaching.

The following passages in Scripture give us, and those who would seek God’s perspective, where to go for truth.

“And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits and into wizards . . . should not a people seek unto their God?” (Isaiah 8:19)

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, . . . and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5)

**The Great Delivery**

God is able to deliver those who seek Him. Victory is ours. But first, we must receive God’s power.

We have been discussing the problems of satanic involvement. Whether we become deceived by use of the Ouija Board, music, divination or by Dungeons and Dragons, the end result is the same occult bondage.

Mark Bubeck’s Moody Press book, _The Adversary_, gives us a sound basis for applying sound biblical doctrine in resisting the devil as he attempts to infiltrate our lives. Basic to all victory of the believer over Satan is the absolute truth of biblical doctrine. There is no substitute. The greatest key in warfare against Satan is when we recognize that God’s truth is our only offense.
Bubeck refers to “doctrinal prayer” as an effective tool to use in spiritual warfare. The sixth chapter of Ephesians tells us that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. We cannot effectively engage Satan in warfare on the natural plane; we must enter the spiritual dimension to adequately challenge Satan and defeat him and his host. According to Bubeck, doctrinal prayer

...is the practice of praying or applying the objective, absolute truths of the Word of God as the hope and basis of resolving our prayer burden.

Doctrinal prayer presupposes that we have a deep understanding of the Scriptures. Bible memorization is a must for this type of prayer.

Another aspect of our spiritual warfare is that of resistance. We are called to resist the devil. The term “resist” basically means to stand, to stand invincibly or successfully. We can stand firm and remain invincible because of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. Jesus was victorious over Satan at the cross. As God’s people, we are victorious over Satan because of Jesus. We can successfully resist Satan as we stand in right relationship with Christ. Since we are in Christ, and He has all authority in heaven and earth, we are in the only place of victory.

Ephesians 6 speaks of our spiritual armor. With the exception of the sword, this armor is defensive in nature. We have the victory; it has been won we simply need to stand our ground. Satan has been defeated at the cross (Colossians 2:8-15) and made powerless (Hebrews 2:14-15). The believer needs to stand in his rightful position in Christ as victor; Jesus has already won the battle.

The Holy Spirit of God shows us the way to righteousness and restoration. Satan attempts to convince us that we are so bad that God wouldn’t want anything to do with us. He seeks to convince us that there is no forgiveness for what we have done or that we have committed the unpardonable sin.

The Holy Spirit uses God’s Word to give us hope and assurance of God’s love and forgiveness, whereas Satan creates despair, doubt, resentment, and anger toward God, His Word, and His people. Satan intends for us to feel as though no one as bad as we are could ever really be saved.

Doctrine and right understanding is important to our spiritual welfare. It is the foundation upon which everything stands. Without it we are subject to every wind that blows, every false teaching that Satan would use to lure us.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have trusted in His blood atonement, we have a vast number of tools to render the enemy ineffective. Power, position, authority, total victory over Satan’s world belong to us. All that remains is for us to appropriate God’s promises and recognize our position in Christ, focus our attention against the devil’s work, and to rest in what our Lord has done for us.

Satanism is a growing concern in our culture. With this growth comes a great deal of confusion and a lack of understanding. The following information is designed to help you understand the problem by clearly defining the different aspects of the occult and giving you concise information that you can use.

**Defining the Occult**

**Cult**

A cult is a group of people polarized around an individual with a magnetic personality, who deviates
from orthodox Christianity by distorting the central message of the Bible by additional revelation or by introducing their personal understanding of primary biblical doctrines such as the person of Jesus Christ, heaven, hell, salvation, atonement, the virgin birth, etc.

Occult

Secret or hidden knowledge. This knowledge is not discerned by the five senses and is therefore, supernaturally received through the practice of divination.

Witchcraft

The use of scripturally forbidden supernatural powers to manipulate people and events. Commonly known as the “craft of the wise” or “wicca,” the worship of nature and feminine energies mother nature. Witchcraft is manifested in two opposing views: white magic, and black magic or witchcraft (see Deuteronomy 18:10)

White Magic

The use of supernatural power to manipulate a person or an event to bring about good. The practice of divination is used to bring about “positive” results such as knowledge, healing, etc.

Black Magic

The use of supernatural power to manipulate a person or an event to bring about evil or destruction. Manipulation is achieved by use of rituals and the casting of spells.

Satanism

Unlike Witchcraft, Satanism is the worship of Satan, formerly known as Lucifer, and the practice of Black Magic. Satanism is a reaction against the Christian church and the Word of God in particular. Satanism promotes a do-what-you-want attitude and is ultimately the worship of oneself.

Categories of Involvement

Individuals involved in satanic activity fall into one of four categories:

- Multi-generational international organization
- National organizations
- Independent self-styled groups
- Individual dabblers

The greatest increase in involvement is among the latter group the dabbler. The dabbler is, in most cases, from a middle to upper-middle class, caucasian home and is a user of drugs and other controlled substances.

The larger concern is not in the number of young people involved in satanic activity but what they are capable of doing when they become absorbed in the worship of Satan.

Satanism centers around involvement in animal sacrifice, blood ritual, sex, the use of drugs and sometimes murder. According to “The Addiction Letter” (1/89),

Most Satanism revolves around a drug and alcohol dependent lifestyle which glorifies violence, hate, lying, stealing, and vandalism. The involved youngster craves a higher power to validate . .
chemical dependence and Satan fills the spiritual void.

The Mental Profile of the Dabbler

- Rebellion
- Boredom
- Low self-worth

Warning Signs of the Dabbler

The dabbler is likely to have difficulty relating to peers and in most cases, they have withdrawn from their family and religious heritage. They tend to become involved in a variety of the following:

- A drop in grades
- Burglary
- Drug use
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Mind control
- Animal mutilation
- Increased hatred
- Murder
- Suicide

Drug abuse is the common denominator in all levels of Satanism. Drugs have become the primary source of mind-altering experiences for the Satanist, thereby, giving him a false sense of power and spiritual potency.

Characteristics that may indicate satanic involvement

- Avoiding family members
- A change in friends
- Becoming secretive about activities
- Loss of interest in extra-curricular activities
- Personality changes
- An unusual interest in books, movies, videos, etc. with an occult theme
- Use of drugs and alcohol
- Lack of attendance of worship with family

Individuals are recruited into satanic groups by any number or combination of the following:

- Free drugs or sex
- Companionship
- Power
- Money
- Pornography
- Personal choice

Satan’s Goal

According to scripture (Matthew 4:9, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Revelation 12:9), Satan’s goal is to deceive man by blinding him to the truth of the gospel and to receive worship for himself (Isaiah 14:12-14). On a more practical level Satan desires to alter an individual’s values and turn them against
themselves, their beliefs, family, God and society.

The Church of Satan

Anton Szandor LaVey formed the Church of Satan in 1966. LaVey, the author of *The Satanic Bible*, is perhaps the most common source of satanic ritual and understanding available to young people today. It can be found in most large secular bookstores. The Satanic Bible has sold more than 600,000 copies since it was first published by Avon Books in 1969.

Secret things

Another common denominator in satanic groups is secrecy. Individuals keep a journal of activity, rituals, charms, or messages in a notebook, blank book and sometimes even a floppy disc. This information is often written in an alphabet that is not widely known. Alphabets commonly used by occultists are: the witches alphabet, the celtic alphabet used by the Druids, the Enochian alphabet, the Egyptian and others.

Personal Initiation

Initiation plays a major role in group activity. Through initiation an individual is given a chance to declare total allegiance to Satan by participation. Often one will sever a portion of a finger or a toe to indicate their commitment to the unholy one.

Other acts include being a participant in a ritual where mutilation of an animal or human is a part of the activity. These acts are usually video-taped to be used at a later time to keep the individual in line if need be. In some cases a criminal act is perpetrated where the initiate is involved in a key role. An unholy communion of sorts is taken during initiatory rituals where a cup or chalice (usually stolen from a church) is used containing a mixture of wine, blood (human or animal) and urine. Satanism is not for the faint-hearted.

Other methods of initiation include body markings. An inverted cross may be burned into one’s forearm or chest, etc.

Body Markings

Commonly used markings include the following (it is important to note that body markings can be used for the preparation of a sacrifice, as well as initiation into a group):

- Goathead
- Inverted cross
- Skull
- Pentagram
- Baphomet
- MENA (amen)
- Black rose
- Swastika

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Recommended Readings

Mormon Beliefs about Prophecy, Heaven, and Celestial Marriage

Russ Wise demonstrates some ways in which Mormonism cannot be true because of false prophecies. He also examines their beliefs about three levels of heaven, and the concept of being married for eternity, even though scripture contradicts these doctrines.

The Book of Mormon: A Superior Revelation or a Hoax?

Missionaries for the Mormon Church have converted millions of people to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by convincing them that the Book of Mormon is true and superior to the Bible.

The Book of Mormon claims to be history of “the period from 600 BC to 421 AD during which the Nephite, Lamanite, and Mulekite civilizations flourished.” \(1\) It is also believed by the Mormon Church that these civilizations were descendants of Lehi, a Jew who led a colony of people from Jerusalem to the Americas in 600 BC.
The Nephite prophet Mormon and his son Moroni played major roles in bringing the lost story of these civilizations to light. War broke out among the descendants of Lehi, and as they were about to annihilate one another, Mormon wrote their history on golden plates and hid them in the hill Cumorah in New York state.

According to Bruce R. McConkie, a Mormon scholar, the Book of Mormon has three purposes:

- To bear record of Christ and clarify his Divine Sonship and mission, proving that he is the Redeemer and Savior;
- To teach the doctrines of the gospel in such a perfect way that the plan of salvation will be clearly revealed;
- To stand as a witness that Joseph Smith was the Lord’s anointed through whom the latter-day work of restoration would be accomplished.\(^2\) (According to the Mormon Church, Christianity was corrupted after the death of the last apostle and Joseph Smith was anointed by God to restore the true church.)

Referring to the Book of Mormon, the Mormon apostle Orson Pratt, said: “This book must be either true or false. If true, it is one of the most important messages ever sent from God…. If false, it is one of the most cunning, wicked…impositions ever palmed upon the world, calculated to deceive and ruin millions.”\(^3\)

It is imperative that we recognize the Book of Mormon for what it is and challenge those who continue to perpetuate the false idea that it is true. In order for the Book of Mormon to be accepted as divine truth, the Bible must be discredited.

The book of 2 Nephi in the Book of Mormon says: “Because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words.”\(^4\) Joseph Smith said, “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book.”\(^5\)

The underlying problem with the Book of Mormon is that there is absolutely no objective, external evidence for much of the information found in the book. And the information that is trustworthy was plagiarized right out of the King James Bible. Beyond the fact that the Book of Mormon cannot be verified externally, the potential convert is told that the Smithsonian Institution uses the Book of Mormon to aid its archaeological work. However, in a letter referring to this Mormon claim, the Smithsonian Institution Department of Anthropology states: “The Smithsonian Institution has never used the Book of Mormon in any way as a scientific guide. Smithsonian archaeologists see no connection between the archeology of the New World and the subject matter of the Book.”\(^6\)

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth President of the Church, has unintentionally summarized my thoughts about the Book of Mormon exactly as he stated, “If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who willfully attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an impostor cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth. If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions which would be easy to detect.”\(^7\)

It is interesting to note that there have been close to four thousand corrections made in the Book of Mormon to date. What an epitaph for a “perfect” book of divine teaching.
Prophesies That Didn’t Come True

Mormon writers have influenced millions of people over the years and have been instrumental in developing less than truthful statements concerning the church. These statements, or prophesies, must be looked at carefully, then refuted when they miss the mark of legitimacy.

It is imperative that we understand the biblical teaching regarding a prophet. Deuteronomy 18:20-22 says:

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. . .”{8}

If the prophecy does not come to pass, the scripture is plain in stating that the individual is not a prophet of God and that he should be put to death. There is no acceptable average of correctness other than 100% correct, 100% of the time. Anything less had grave consequences.

The president of the Mormon Church is known as the “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator” of the church. It is their duty to divine the word of God, to be His mouthpiece.

Perhaps the most embarrassing prophecy that did not come to pass is the prophecy regarding the temple in Zion. The Doctrine and Covenants, a later book of revelations given by Joseph Smith, says this about the temple:

“Verily this is the word of the Lord, that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place…. For verily this generation shall not all pass away until an house shall be built unto the Lord. . .”{9}

This prophecy was in reference to Jackson County, Missouri. It is interesting to note that this prophecy was given in September of 1832 and that there has not been a temple built as of this date nor within the generation of those living in 1832.

Another prophecy related to the temple in Zion is found in Doctrine and Covenants 97:19. It states: “And the nations of the earth shall honor her, and shall say: Surely Zion is the city of our God, and surely Zion cannot fall, neither be moved out of her place, for God is there. . .”

Once again it is noteworthy that a temple was not built in Missouri, but that a temple WAS built in Salt Lake City. If the prophecy is true, Salt Lake City cannot be Zion. However, if Salt Lake City is indeed Zion, the prophecy is utterly false.

On another occasion, February 14, 1835, Joseph Smith said that “it was the will of God that those who went to Zion, with a determination to lay down their lives, if necessary, should be ordained to the ministry, and go forth to prune the vineyard for the last time, or the coming of the Lord, which was nigh even fifty-six years should wind up the scene.”{10} The truth regarding this prophecy that Jesus would return in 56 years is obvious to any living today. His bride is yet waiting His return after one hundred and fifty-five years.

The fact that these and other prophecies of Joseph Smith were not fulfilled leads us to only one
conclusion in light of Deuteronomy 18:20-22. Joseph Smith was indeed a false prophet.

The Great Restoration or the Great Fabrication?

The Book of Mormon tells us that many of the truths of the early church were lost when the church fell into apostasy. Joseph Smith taught that after the death of Jesus Christ and the apostles, there was a total apostasy. They further teach that the churches of our day do not represent Christ and have, in fact, done away with many of the original truths of the early church. The Book of Mormon states, “they have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious; and also many covenants of the Lord have they taken away.” (11)

One major aspect of the restoration which Joseph Smith was called to establish was that of the priesthoods—both the Aaronic and the Melchizedek.

The Mormon Missionary Handbook indicates that the only ones who have the authority to baptize new believers are those who hold the Priesthood in the Mormon Church. However, when one takes a critical look, it is obvious that the concept of reintroducing the priesthoods into the church is an unbiblical endeavor.

This is of primary importance when one realizes that the structure of the Mormon Church is based on the revelation of Joseph Smith. (12) According to the past president of the Mormon Church, Spencer W. Kimball, “The priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man on earth to act in all things pertaining to the salvation of men. It is the means whereby the Lord acts through men to save souls. Without this priesthood power, men are lost.” (13) Bishop H. Burke Peterson declared that the effectiveness of the priest’s authority, or “the power that comes through that authority—depends on the patterns of our lives; it depends on our righteousness.” (14) It is interesting to note that the priest’s power to do the will of God is not given by the Holy Spirit but comes from one’s personal righteousness.

David Witmer, one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, had this to say about the Priesthoods: “This matter of ‘Priesthood,’ since the days of Sidney Rigdon, has been the great hobby and stumbling-block of the Latter- Day Saints. Priesthood means authority; and authority is the word we should use. I do not think the word priesthood is mentioned in the New Covenant of the Book of Mormon.” (15) Witmer goes on to say that it was in fact Sydney Rigdon who gave Joseph Smith the idea of reintroducing the Priesthoods. The Mormon Church had been operating for two full years before the establishing of this new line of authority. About two thousand followers were baptized into the church and confirmed without the advantage of a recognized priest.

David Witmer addresses his remarks to Joseph Smith as he continues his address to all believers in Christ by saying, “You have changed the revelations from the way they were first given and as they are today in the Book of Commandments.... You have changed the revelations to support the error of a President of the high priesthood.... You have altered the revelations to support you in going beyond the plain teachings of Christ in the new covenant part of the Book of Mormon.” (16)

Not only does Joseph Smith have problems with his revelation concerning the priesthoods with the authority of the Book of Mormon and David Witmer, but the Bible does not help him either.

It is apparent that when young Joseph was plagiarizing the Bible that he did not look very closely at the book of Hebrews. If he had, he might have realized that God had sent His Son to be the eternal High Priest.
Three Chances at Heaven

Joseph Smith was a man of revelation. Perhaps the most welcome revelations from young Joseph were his new teachings about salvation. The idea that all people would receive a measure of salvation was widely received by the Mormon Church.

As well, his teaching regarding the celestial kingdom found wide acceptance. According to Bruce R. McConkie, author of Mormon Doctrine, "Heaven is the celestial Kingdom of God."{17} LeGrand Richards, a presiding bishop of the Mormon Church, says that we have “at least five places to which we may go after death.”{18} He says we “have three heavens, paradise, and the hell so often spoken of in the scriptures. . . .”{19} Joseph Smith taught that “in the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees.”{20} However, according to the Holy Bible, Joseph’s teaching about man’s disposition after death is anything but scriptural.

The revelation or “The Vision,” as it came to be known, is found in the Doctrine and Covenants and was given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on February 16, 1832.{21} This revelation was given by Jesus {vs. 14} to those individuals who will be in the first resurrection of the Firstborn. The Firstborn are those who held the priesthood.

The Celestial Kingdom is made up of three levels or degrees of heaven. The first, or the lower level of heaven, is known as the telestial glory. This degree of heaven is held for those “who received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus,”{22} but who, nevertheless, did not deny the Holy Spirit. The Telestial Kingdom is for those who chose wickedness over godliness.

The second degree of heaven is the terrestrial glory. This level is held for those “who, though honorable, failed to comply with the requirements for exaltation, were blinded by the craftiness of men and unable to receive and obey the higher laws of God.”{23} Likewise, it is for those who rejected Christ in mortal life but accepted Him afterwards.{24}

The third, or the highest level, of heaven is that of the celestial. This degree is held for those who have received the Temple ordinances. They have been married in the Temple for all time and eternity and they are gods.{25} According to James E. Talmage, they “have striven to obey all the divine commandments,. . . have accepted the testimony of Christ, obeyed ‘the laws and ordinances of the Gospel,’ and received the Holy Spirit.”{26} Therefore, they are entitled to the highest glory.

The remaining options for the individual who does not qualify for the celestial glories are paradise and perdition, for the Latter-day Saints do not believe in a hell. Joseph Smith put it this way: “There is no hell. All will find a measure of salvation.”{27}

At death the individual’s spirit goes either to paradise to later be judged and offered one of the three degrees of heaven, or his spirit is sent to perdition where it is given a chance to repent and thus gain a higher heavenly option.

Perdition, commonly known as Spirit-Prison Hell, is a temporary state even though it lasts more than a thousand years. It is interesting to note that the Book of Mormon does not seem to agree with the Doctrine and Covenants where it clearly states there is no second chance for repentance after death. Alma 34:32 states,

“For behold this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God….Do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end…if ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil,
and he doth seal you his; therefore, the Spirit of the Lord hath withdrawn from you, and hath no place in you, and the devil hath all power over you; and this is the final state of the wicked."{28}

Once again it becomes evident that Joseph Smith changed his mind regarding another key revelation, since the teaching of the Bible does not correspond to the changeableness of the Mormon prophet. We must conclude that Mormonism completely lacks of any biblical basis and is truly another gospel.

**Celestial Marriage: Fact or Fiction?**

Eternal Marriage is essential for exaltation. A key element of Mormon doctrine and the foundation for exaltation in the highest heaven is celestial marriage. Exaltation is the primary goal for each Mormon to achieve. To understand the Latter-Day Saints’ desire to enter into an eternal marriage it is important to understand the term “exaltation.”

Exaltation, according to an official Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints publication, “is eternal life, the kind of life that God lives. He lives in great glory. He is perfect. He possesses all knowledge and all wisdom. He is the father of spirit children. He is a creator. We can become gods like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation.”{29}

We find in the Book of Moses in Mormon scriptures God saying, “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”{30}—in other words, to help man and woman become gods and goddesses in the celestial kingdom.

“An eternal marriage must be performed by one who holds the sealing powers and authority”{31}—one who holds the priesthood authority. The marriage “must also be done in the proper place. The proper place is in one of the holy temples of our Lord. The temple is the only place this holy ordinance can be performed.”{32} Mormons believe that if they are married by any other authority the marriage is for this life only and therefore negates their opportunity for celestial exaltation.

William Clayton, Hyrum Smith’s clerk, was present when Joseph Smith first announced the revelation regarding plural and celestial marriage. Clayton wrote that from Joseph he “learned that the doctrine of plural and celestial marriage is the most holy and important doctrine ever revealed to man on earth, and that without obedience to that principle no man can ever attain to the fullness of exaltation in celestial glory.”{33}

This revelation was first given publicly at Nauvoo, Illinois, July 12, 1843. In May of that year Joseph revealed that “In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood [meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage]; and if he does not, he cannot obtain it.”{34} Joseph goes on to reveal that “if ye abide not that covenant, then are ye damned.”{35}

It has already been pointed out that the individual will receive a measure of salvation regardless of his disposition. The recurring question that remains is, Why should I subject myself to the regimen of the church (ie. the hassles) if I will receive salvation anyway? We find the answer further in the revelation. “We must be obedient to every covenant that we make in the temple of the Lord. He (God) has said that if we are true and faithful we shall pass by the angels to our exaltation. We will become gods.”{36} The Mormon hopes to become a god himself but only if he is in complete compliance with the church.
It is noteworthy that the teaching that reveals the foundation for celestial marriage (exaltation) is not to be found in the Book of Mormon, the “most correct” of any book on earth. Therefore, it seems that the motivation for entering into celestial marriage is not based on fact but on the possibility of being a god or a goddess.

The teachings of the Mormon church often go unchallenged and many in the church, along with a growing number outside its doors believe it to be a Christian institution. Those in the church have in many cases been “fellowshipped”; that is, they have been catered to for the specific reason of gaining their membership in the church. Often these members have not clearly discerned the doctrine of the church.

Those outside the Mormon Church see the good works of its members and because of their lack of understanding of Christian teaching and their acute lack of knowledge regarding Mormon sources, they tend to think that the Mormon church is as Christian as the Baptists, Methodists and the Presbyterians.

Brigham Young, second President of the Mormon Church, challenged the world to test the teachings of the Latter-Day Saints. This essay is an answer to his challenge.

Notes
2. Ibid., 98-99.
15. David Witmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, 64.
16. Ibid., 49.
17. McConkie, 348.
19. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 76:82.
Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Trinity: A Christian Perspective

Dr. Pat Zukeran provides Christians with a biblical perspective on countering the false teaching of Jehovah’s Witnesses regarding the nature of God and the Trinity. Countering these non-Christian views will enable you to get to the heart of the matter in sharing Christ with members of this cult.

The Trinity

In another essay (Jehovah’s Witnesses: Witnessing to the Witnesses) I discussed effective evangelistic strategies when sharing the faith with Jehovah’s Witnesses. We covered some effective techniques such as the Witnesses’ record of false prophecy, the name “Jehovah”, the bodily resurrection of Christ, and the personality of the Holy Spirit. In this essay I would like to teach you how to defend the doctrine of the Trinity, a truth clearly denied by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Before we can defend this doctrine, however, we must have a clear understanding of the Trinity. Too many Christians lack a solid understanding of the Triune nature of God.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the belief that there is one God who has revealed Himself in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three persons make up the one true God. These three persons are of the same substance, equal in power and glory. It is important we understand this doctrine because the wrong Jesus or the wrong God cannot save us from eternal death. Paul makes a clear warning of this in 2 Corinthians 11:4.

The Bible clearly states that there is only one God. Deuteronomy 6:4 states, “Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.” Isaiah 44:6 states, “I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God
besides me.” Clearly, these verses reveal that there is only one God. Yet, there are three separate persons in the Bible who are called God and have the characteristics only God can have. The Trinity is a difficult concept to grasp, because we are finite beings trying to explain an infinite God who is beyond our understanding.

Let’s take a look at some verses that back up our doctrine of the Trinity. The Father is obviously called God as seen throughout the Bible. No one will argue that point. So there is one member of the Trinity, the Father. Jesus the Son, is a separate person but He is also called God. John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” So here we see clearly, the Son is also called God.

The Holy Spirit is also a separate person, and He is also called God. First, let us understand, the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. He is a person and has the characteristics of a person. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), He speaks (Acts 13:2), and He can be lied to (Act 5:3-4). In Acts 5:3-4 the Holy Spirit is called God, “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?…You have not lied to men, but to God.'”

So we see clearly that there are three persons in the Bible, and all three are called God. Yet, we must remember, there is only one God according to the verses we looked at Deuteronomy 6:4 and Isaiah 44:6. Therefore, we come to the conclusion that the Trinity is made up of three separate persons who are the one true God. At this point we need to look at verses Jehovah’s Witnesses use to attempt to disprove the Trinity and learn how to refute these arguments. Then we will look at the best verses to use in demonstrating the truth of the Trinity to Jehovah’s Witnesses.

**Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Bible**

I run in to many Christians who tell me, “The Jehovah’s Witnesses know their Bible so well, and they’ve got so many verses memorized.” The truth is, they don’t know their Bible well, it’s just that we Christians are lacking in our Bible knowledge. When it comes to the Trinity, Witnesses only know about 8 verses to defend their view. We’ll be studying the main verses they use to try to disprove the Trinity.

In one approach they attempt to show that Jesus cannot be God because He was created. The verse they use here is Colossians 1:15, “And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.” Here the Witnesses say Christ is the first created being of God. Therefore, they conclude Jesus cannot be God since He was created.

The key to understanding this verse is understanding the term first-born, what does it mean? The Greek word for “first created” is the word Protoktios. If Paul wanted to say Christ was the first created being, he would have used this word but he does not. He uses another term, Prototokos. Paul is referring to the Jewish use of the word first-born which not only means first one born but also is used as a title of sovereignty and pre-eminence.

Here’s an example of the meaning of the word. In Psalm 89:27 God says of David, “I also shall make him My first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth.” Let’s take a good look and see how first-born is used here. Is David the first-born son of Jesse? No, he is the eighth and youngest son of Jesse. Then how is it that David is the first-born? In the Old Testament use of the word, he is first-born in that he is pre-eminent or sovereign of all the kings of the earth.

Now stick that usage of first-born into the context of Colossians 1:15, and it fits perfectly. Not only that, have the Witnesses read on with you to verse 18. Verse 18 shows that Paul is clearly talking
about the pre-eminence of Christ for he says, “He is also the head of the body” and “the first-born” for the purpose, “that in everything he might be pre-eminent.” If we were to replace first-born in verse 18 with the term pre-eminent, it would fit perfectly in the context. However, if we replaced it with first created, it would not fit in that context.

Another verse the Witnesses use to show Jesus was created is Revelation 3:14, “And to the angel of Laodicea write: ‘The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Beginning of the creation of God....’” Here the faithful witness is Jesus and He is called, “The Beginning of the creation.”

The Greek word for beginning is arche, which is used in many ways. It is used to mean “origin or source of, or ruler,” but not first creation. Turn with the Witness to Revelation 21:6. In these two verses, Jehovah calls Himself the beginning. Does that mean Jehovah was created? No. Therefore, the Witnesses use of the term beginning, is incorrect.

Jesus was never created. John 1:1 states, “In the beginning was the Word” Jesus was with God from eternity past; Jesus has no beginning because He is the eternal God.

Is Jesus Inferior to God?

Is Jesus inferior to God? Another way the Witnesses try to disprove the deity of Christ is to show that Christ is inferior in nature to God. The verses they use here are John 14:28 and 1 Corinthians 11:3.

John 14:28 reads, “You heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.” They will ask you, “How can Jesus be equal to God if here He states ‘the Father is greater than I’?”

The term greater refers to position, not nature. The term better refers to nature. Here is a good example I use in illustrating this passage. The President is greater than you or I, correct? Yes, as Chief Executive Officer of the United States he is greater than you or I. The Jehovah’s Witness will agree. But, is the President better than you or I? What I mean is, is there anything about the President that makes him a superior being to you or me? No.

You see, greater refers to position, not nature. We see in Philippians 2:6-8, that Christ though He was in the form of God, did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself and submitted Himself to the Father and took on the form of a servant. Though Jesus emptied Himself, He was always in nature God and equal to the Father in nature. If Jesus wanted to say He was inferior to God in nature, He would have said, “The Father is better than I.”

Here is an example of the use of the term better in Hebrews 1:4 (NAS); it says speaking of Jesus, “having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.” The NI V reads, “So he became as much superior to the angels....” Here we see that Jesus is a being superior to the angels, so the term better, is used. Remember, in explaining this verse, the term greater refers to position, not nature.

Another verse the Witnesses will use is 1 Corinthians 11:3, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” Here they say since the head of Christ is God, Jesus must be inferior to God.

Once again you use the same concept of equal in nature, but Christ submitted Himself to the Father. Here the principle of headship and submission established by God is displayed both in marriage and in the Trinity. Now show the Jehovah’s Witnesses that in this passage, the head of the woman is man. “Does this mean that the husband is a superior being to his wife?” The answer is obviously,
“No.” The husband is greater than his wife by way of position but not by nature. The same applies to the Father and the Son. The Father is greater by position, but not better by nature.

Remember when you’re Witnessing, you are not there to win an argument, but to show them the error of their ways in a loving and Christ-like manner, but also you are not to be afraid to boldly defend the faith.

**Proving the Deity of Christ**

One of the best defenses is a good offense. When defending the Trinity to Witnesses, take charge of the conversation. Don’t let the Witnesses run you in circles. You pick the topic and keep them on the topic you choose, instead of having them ask you all the questions, you have some questions ready for them to answer.

The best way to do this, when they appear at your doorstep, is ask them, “What organization are you with?” They will reply, “We are Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Then ask them, “Whom do you say is the God of the Apostles?” They will reply, “Jehovah.” You then reply, “How do you explain the fact that Jesus is the God of the Apostles?” They will be surprised and say, “No, that’s not true, where do you find that?” Here you have taken over the conversation. Now, stay in charge of the conversation and don’t let them break off on another tangent.

Next, you turn to the first text John 20:28, where Thomas, after seeing the resurrected Lord, proclaims to Jesus, “My Lord and My God.” Here, Thomas calls Jesus God. The Witnesses have two responses to this. One, they may say, “Well, Thomas was so surprised at seeing Jesus that he shouted, ‘My Lord and My God,’ in surprise just as we shout, ‘Oh, my God,’ when we’re surprised.” There’s a problem with that. Thomas was a devout Jew and never would have shouted “my God” in surprise for that would be blasphemy for a Jew. A second response they have is, Thomas looked at Jesus and said, “My Lord,” then looked to heaven and said, “My God.” There’s a problem with that too because the context does not say that. If you look at the passage, Thomas says, “My Lord and My God” to Jesus. So Thomas saw clearly that Jesus was God.

The next verse to turn them to is John 1:1. Now here the Witnesses will think you’re falling into their trap for they have a different translation. Their translation says, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a god.”

Well, the first thing to do is to show them that both translations can’t be right. Someone is wrong. Ask them, “If we were to go to the local library here, we would find over thirty translations of the Bible. How many would translate it your way?” The truth is only one would, theirs. Then ask them, “Are you willing to say all the translators for the past centuries have been wrong and only yours is correct?” If they’re honest, they’ll think about it. Others will say, “Yes, ours is the only true translation.”

It is then you say, “Let’s say your translation is correct and mine is wrong, you still have a problem. How many gods do you have in that verse?” Then you take their Bible and count the number of gods with them. Say, “Well, here is one God with a capital G, what kind of god is He?” They’ll say, “A true god.” Then you go on and say, “Here’s another god with a small g, what kind of god is He?” They must say,” a true god.” Then you ask them, “How many gods do you have?” This is where they get stuck for they must either say two gods and be polytheists or deny their translation. These are two great verses to use when witnessing to Jehovah’s Witnesses.
The Alpha and the Omega

As I have witnessed to many Jehovah’s Witnesses, I have found some verses that work most effectively in proving the deity of Christ. Here are two of my favorite combination of verses.

The first verse is Revelation 1:8. I am reading from the Jehovah’s Witness Bible, and it reads, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says Jehovah God. Ask the Witness, “What does Alpha and Omega mean?” They’ll reply, “The beginning and the end.” Then ask them, “How many Alphas and Omegas can you have?” They’ll answer, “Only one.” Make sure you get this point across, there is only one Alpha and Omega.

Then turn to Revelation 22:12-13 which says, “Look I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me….I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Ask the Witnesses, “Who do you say the Alpha and Omega is?” They will say, “Jehovah.” Now take a careful look. The Alpha and Omega in verse twelve is coming quickly. Let’s see who is speaking in verse twelve.

Look at verse sixteen, “I Jesus, sent my angel to bear witness to you people of these things for the congregations. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.” It is Jesus speaking in verse twelve. If there is any doubt go to verse 20 which says, “He that bears witness of these things says, ‘Yes; I am coming quickly’ Amen come Lord Jesus.” So it is clear that the Alpha and the Omega in verse twelve is Jesus. Here is a strong proof text that Jesus is God because both Jehovah and Jesus are called the Alpha and the Omega.

Another pair of verses that are effective when used together are Isaiah 44:6 and Revelation 1:17-18. Isaiah 44:6 says, “This is what Jehovah has said, ‘The king of Israel and the Repurchaser of him, Jehovah of armies, I am the first and I am the last.’” Ask the Witnesses how many firsts and lasts can you have? It’s obvious to anyone you can only have one first and one last. Ask them, “Who is the first and the last?” They will say, “Jehovah.” Now turn to Revelation 1:17-18 which says, “Do not be fearful; I am the First and the Last, and the living one; and I became dead but look! I am living forever.” Who is speaking here? Obviously, it is Jesus for He died but is now alive, and guess what? He is called the First and the Last. Here again we see Jesus is God.

These are my favorite verses, and I have never had Witnesses refute these arguments. Remember, the Witnesses at your door won’t convert right then and there. The key is to get them to start thinking and questioning the organization, and down the road, maybe in several years, they will seek answers and that will lead them out of the organization. Don’t give up or be discouraged when sharing with Witnesses. Though they may be rude and show no signs that they are thinking, the Word of God is powerful and is working in their hearts even if we can’t see it.

Remember Dr. Walter Martin (author of Kingdom of the Cults) went fifteen years without a convert, but he never gave up. Today we know of hundreds he pulled out of the organization. Continue to study the Word, and God bless you as you defend the faith.

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The Occult Connection - A Christian View

Occult philosophy has permeated nearly every area of our society. I believe that Christians need to think clearly about these issues and apply a biblical worldview to them.

Consider the pervasive influence of the occult. Students are involved with role-playing fantasy games that introduce them to occult concepts. Universities offer courses in paranormal and occult science. Occultic themes provide popular material for television shows and movies. Police departments are beginning to realize that many of the crimes they investigate have occult origins. Everywhere we go, it seems that the occult is present.

The word *occult* comes from the Latin *occultus*, which means "concealed." In its ordinary usage, it means "beyond the bounds of ordinary knowledge—the mysterious, the concealed, or that which is hidden from view." The occult involved such practices as magic, divination, incantations, paranormal experiences, and the New Age concept of the expansion of consciousness.

Students of the occult frequently divide occult phenomena into three areas: (1) forms of divination, (2) types of mystical experience, and (3) magical manipulation.

The most common form of divination is astrology. Other examples of divination would include palmistry, ouija boards, tarot cards, biorhythm, crystal balls, and interpretation of dreams. Divination is evil and is strictly forbidden in Deuteronomy 18.

Types of mystical experience would include any paranormal attempt to transcend the bounds of our physical world. The out-of-body experiences reported by psychics fit into this category. Other examples would be telekinesis, clairvoyance, and psychic trances. This would also include seances, necromancy, and psychic healing.

The final category would be magical manipulation. This is not to be confused with the art of illusions used by professional magicians. By contrast, occultists say they can use hidden forces in the spiritual realm to manipulate people and circumstances.

Practitioners would include sorcerers, witches, and witch doctors. Many of these practitioners are mentioned in the Bible. In the Old Testament we find Jezebel as well as the magicians in Egypt. In the New Testament are Simon (Acts 8) and Bar-Jesus (Acts 13).

Finally, let me address how Christians should respond to the occult. We should be equipped to counteract its influence in society. First, Christians should know God’s word. The best way to discover a counterfeit is to know the real thing. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Know God’s word and put on the whole armor of God.

Second, resist Satan and all of his influence in your life. If we resist the devil, the Bible teaches that he will flee from us. Third, destroy occult books and paraphernalia in your possession. Confess and repent any involvement you have had with the occult.

Fourth, submit your life totally to Jesus Christ. As we yield to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to dwell within us, we are fortified for spiritual warfare. The Bible teaches that greater is He who is in you, then he who is in the world. Lean not on your own strength but on the strength of the Lord. You can have victory over the forces of darkness if you know the enemy and marshall God’s spiritual resources for the battle.
Halloween

Next I would like to focus on Halloween. Most people see Halloween as nothing more than a harmless festival that allows kids to collect candy. Yet Halloween is much more than a harvest festival. Its origins are deeply rooted in the occult, and the various practitioners of the black arts identify Halloween as a significant event in the pagan calendar. The following questions and answers should help you be more aware of the occultic nature of Halloween.

The date, October 31st, has long been known as “The Festival of the Dead.” The Celtic tribes and their priests, the Druids, celebrated this day as a marker for the change from life to death. Today, the modern celebration of Halloween is usually performed by adherents of witchcraft who use the day (and especially the night) for their rituals.

Witches celebrate Halloween as the “Feast of Samhain”—the first feast of the witchcraft year. Being a festival of the dead, Halloween is a time when witches attempt to communicate with the dead through various forms of divination.

Witches believe that this day marks the time when the Mother Goddess (also known as Mother Nature, Goddess of the Earth) returns to the underworld to sleep under a blanket of snow. In her place comes another god—the Horned God—who emerges to begin his reign of death. Witches believe this is a time when the life of summer is replaced by the death of winter. Halloween is a high feast day to celebrate the end of summer and the coming of winter.

In later centuries, the Catholic Church attempted to redeem this pagan holiday by designating it as “All Saints Day.” Protestant churches during the Reformation chose not to celebrate this day, seeing it as an attempt to Christianize a pagan holiday.

For example, let’s look at the practice of dressing up on Halloween. During most of the 20th century, children in America have been dressing up on Halloween so they can go out and “trick-or-treat.” This tradition has been self-perpetuating for decades, but if we go back to the origins of Halloween, we can again see the occult connection.

Occultists who revered Halloween as a pagan holy day saw this day as a time of transition between life and death. They believed that during this transition from life to death, the two worlds were momentarily in contact with one another. The veil between these two worlds (the land of the living and the land of the dead) was very thin, and so many believed they would come in contact with the spirit world.

Some occult practitioners practiced divination and believed one could learn the secrets of life and wisdom by lying on a grave and listening to the messages from the long-departed. Others taught that spirits and ghosts left the grave during this night and would seek out warmth in their previous homes. Villagers, fearful of the possibility of being visited by the ghosts of past occupants, would dress up in costumes to scare the spirits on their way. They would also leave food and other treats at their doors to appease the spirits so they would not destroy their homes or crops but instead move on down the road.

Another technique used to scare away the spirits was to carve a scary face into a pumpkin. People hoped this horrible visage would move the spirit on to another home or village and spare their home from destruction. Sometimes the villagers would light a candle and place it within the pumpkin and use it as a lantern (hence the name “Jack-o-Lantern”). Then they would walk from the local grave yard to their homes in an effort to scare off evil spirits that might be walking down the road after leaving the grave.
Within witchcraft there are four pagan festivals celebrated throughout the year. The first festival in the witchcraft calendar is Halloween (October 31). This is the celebration of life and death. It is also known as Hallowmas. Second is Candlemas (February 2) which honors the “God of Death.” This festival gives thanks to him for keeping them from sickness and wishes him well as he journeys back to the underworld. The third festival is Beltane on May eve (April 30). This celebration welcomes new life and involves fertility rituals. A final festival is Lammas (August 1), which is a festival of the harvest. Witches give thanks to the Goddess of the Earth for making the crops grow.

The pagan origins of Halloween should be sufficient to cause Christian parents to question the wisdom of allowing their children to participate in a witchcraft festival. Given this information, parents really have only two choices: fight the celebration of Halloween and provide alternatives.

At a time when schools are removing any religious significance from Christmas (now often merely called winter break) and Easter (spring break), it is ironic that most public schools still celebrate Halloween. Responsible parents should ask school administrators to restrict Halloween celebrations. Pictures of witches, haunted houses, and other occultic practices in the public schools are a promotion of pagan, religious practices.

Many churches have begun to develop creative alternatives. Church youth groups hold bowling or skating parties. Some groups spend the night going out and witnessing to those in the streets. Other churches hold a Fall Fun Festival and have children come to the church facilities in biblical costumes. Such programs keep children safe and focus their attention on the Bible rather than on a pagan, occultic ritual.

**Astrology**

Less conspicuous and more insidious than Halloween is the practice of astrology. Even occupants of the White House have failed to see its occultic connection.

Former White House chief of staff Don Regan said in his book that “virtually every major move and decision the Reagans made during my time as White House chief of staff was cleared in advanced with a woman in San Francisco who drew up horoscopes.” The friend was later identified as Joan Quigley, a San Francisco astrology author.

When Ronald Reagan scheduled the signing of the INF treaty for the afternoon of December 8th instead of during prime-time television hours, many were puzzled. Former chief of staff Don Regan said it was performed in the afternoon because Nancy Reagan said that was when “the stars were right.”

The Reagans were hardly the first national leaders to be interested in astrology. Teddy Roosevelt mounted his natal horoscope on a chessboard so he could study it each day. During World War II, Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Adolf Hitler shared at least one thing in common: they were all interested in horoscopes. And even Charles DeGaulle quoted a pre-war horoscope predicting he would rule France.

Even though astrology is unscientific and illogical, it is still very popular. Over 1200 daily newspapers carry horoscopes, and there are 12,000 full-time and about 175,000 part-time astrologers. Many people make it a daily ritual to consult their horoscopes, and some hire professional astrologers to help them make business and personal decisions.

Astrology had its beginnings in the fertile crescent in Mesopotamia. During the period from the Sumarians through the Chaldeans, astrology gained prominence and developed into the formalized
Astrology is based upon the questionable assumption that the fixed stars, sun, moon, and planets have an influence upon people and historical events. This influence can be determined once one knows the exact hour of one’s birth. In fact, the word *horoscope* means “a consideration of the hour.” Once the time and place of birth are known, the stars can be consulted and a forecast can be made.

There are good scientific reasons to question the basis of astrology. First, it is based upon a geocentric solar system rather than a heliocentric one. The basic premise of astrology is that the sun and planets rotate around the earth. Yet science tells us that the earth and planets rotate around the sun. Thus, the science of astronomy undermines the quackery of astrology.

Second, astrology is based upon the assumption that there are seven planets. Moreover it identifies the sun and moon as planets. Lacking telescopes and other astronomical instruments, the founders of astrology incorrectly identified some heavenly bodies as planets and were unaware of other planets. Thus, a second assumption of astrology fails to square with scientific data.

Third, astrology mixes and matches stars that should not be grouped together. The 12 signs of the zodiac are quite arbitrary. They mix together stars in one constellation that are actually quite far from each other—often in entirely different parts of our Milky Way galaxy. Moreover, since the stars are in motion, some of the constellations change shape over time. In essence, the zodiac of astrology is arbitrary and subject to change and hardly reliable as a guide for one’s future.

But in addition to the scientific problems with astrology, there are also logical problems. First is the well-documented fact that different astrologers sometimes cast different horoscopes for the same person. If astrology were an objective science, we would expect different astrologers to cast the same horoscope for the same person. Instead, they make vastly different predictions about the same person. If we can determine our destiny from the stars, we should not find such vastly different predictions. Since we do, we must conclude that astrology does not lead to logical conclusions.

A second logical problem related to the previous one is that if astrology were true, then twins would have the same destiny. Being born in the same place and at approximately the same time should ensure that twins would have the same destiny. Yet the history of twins shows that although there are similarities, there are also significant differences not readily predicted by astrology.

A third problem is the inability to predict accurately the future of people with known destinies. In order to test this idea, one researcher put together what he called a “test of destinies.” He gave astrologers 40 birthdates. Twenty belonged to known criminals and 20 belonged to peace-loving citizens. He asked them to separate the birthdates into the two categories.

None of the astrologers separated them correctly. The researcher said, “The result is always great confusion: the astrologers invariably select a mixed bag of criminals and peaceful citizens in about the same proportion that a machine would pick randomly.”

Finally, in addition to scientific and logical problems with astrology, there are also scriptural problems with astrology. In Deuteronomy 18:9-12, God lists five categories of detestable practices. These range from witchcraft to child sacrifice. They also include divination, which is the attempt to predict the future through such methods as reading the stars. All of these are listed as detestable practices.

Unfortunately we live in a society that sets up a dichotomy between hard-core occult activity like witchcraft and satanism and so-called soft-core occult such as reading horoscopes and playing with occultic structure found today.
The New Age Movement

Rudyard Kipling once wrote that “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.” But that can no longer be said now that a pantheistic Eastern philosophy has spread to this country. The primary vehicle for this transmission of ideas has been the New Age Movement.

Evidence of Eastern philosophy’s arrival can certainly be seen in many ways. Statements by movie stars, the growth of Eastern cults, and the popularity of films like the Star Wars trilogy testify to the growing influence of New Age ideas. In the movie The Empire Strikes Back, for example, Yoda espouses pantheistic ideas to his Jedi disciple, Luke Skywalker: “You must feel the Force around you. Here, between you and me. Between the rock... everywhere. Yes, even the land."

Defining the New Age

The New Age Movement has taken on a variety of names including the Human Potential Movement, the Third Force, the Aquarian Conspiracy, Cosmic Consciousness, and Cosmic Humanism. Although most refer to it as the New Age Movement, many in the movement do not like that label, and many others would not even consider themselves part of the movement, even though they may hold to many of the core beliefs of the New Age Movement.

Accurately defining the New Age is a formidable task for several reasons. First, the New Age Movement is eclectic and diverse. It is not a cohesive movement but is exceedingly diverse in its composition and ideology. The unifying factors are shared ideology rather than a shared organizational structure.

Second, the New Age Movement is difficult to define because it emphasizes and encourages change. The New Age Movement is syncretistic and therefore evolutionary in its nature. Many proponents change their perspectives, and so it is frequently difficult to pin down the major beliefs of the New Age Movement.

Major Tenets of the New Age

Even given the diversity and transitory nature of the New Age Movement, there are still a number of major tenets generally held in common by most groups within this movement.

First is the belief in monism. New Agers believe that “all is one.” Everything and everyone is
interrelated and interdependent. Ultimately there is no real difference between humans, animals, rocks, or even God. Any differences between these entities are merely apparent, not real.

Second is the belief in pantheism. Since New Agers already believe that “all is one,” the next logical assumption would be that “all is god.” All of creation partakes of the divine essence. All of life (and even non-life) has a spark of divinity within.

The third major tenet of the New Age follows as a logical conclusion from the other two. If “all is one” and “all is god,” then we should conclude that “we are gods.” We are, according to New Agers, ignorant of our divinity. We are “gods in disguise.” The goal, therefore, of the New Age Movement is to discover our own divinity.

Fourth, we discover our own divinity by experiencing a change in consciousness. The human race suffers from a collective form of metaphysical amnesia. We have forgotten that our true identity is divine and thus must undergo a change of consciousness to achieve our true human potential (hence the name, the Human Potential Movement).

A fifth tenet is reincarnation. Most New Agers believe in some form of reincarnation. In its classic form, the cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation are necessary to work off our bad “karma” and to reach perfection. The doctrine of karma says that one’s present condition is determined by one’s actions in a past life.

The Western version of reincarnation held by many New Agers places much less emphasis on bad karma and postulates an upward spiral towards perfection through reincarnation. This view has been espoused by such people as Shirley MacLaine, Sylvester Stallone, George Patton, and Henry Ford.

A final major tenet is moral relativism. New Agers think in terms of gray, rather than black or white. Denying the law of non-contradiction, New Agers will often believe that two conflicting statements can both be true. They will therefore teach that “all religions are true” and “there are many paths to God.”

**A Biblical Evaluation**

When the tenets of the New Age Movement are examined, they are not really new at all. The New Age is really old occultism in new linguistic garb. Many of these concepts can be found in basic form in Genesis 3. Notice these statements made to Eve in the Garden: “You will be like God” (pantheism), “You will not surely die” (reincarnation), “Your eyes will opened” (change of consciousness), and “Did God really say” (moral relativism).

First, a Christian view of reality rejects the concept of monism. The Bible teaches that God’s creation is not an undivided unity but a diversity of created things and beings. The creation is not unified in itself but held together by Christ in whom “all things hold together” (Col. 1:17).

Second, Christianity is theistic, not pantheistic. New Agers teach that God is an impersonal force, while the Bible teaches that God is an imminent, personal, triune, sovereign God. God is separate from His creation rather than merely a part of the creation as pantheism would teach.

Third, we are created in God’s image (Gen. 1:26) and therefore have dignity and value (Psalm 8). New Agers teach that we are gods and thus have divinity within our humanity.

Fourth, New Agers flirt with the occult in their attempt to achieve a change in consciousness. Although these practices are frequently described in benign terms such as parapsychology, they
involve direct contact with spiritual entities. The Bible warns against the danger of these practices and lists such activities as divination and spirit channeling as detestable practices (Deut. 18:9-13) that are to be avoided.

Fifth, the Bible teaches resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15), not reincarnation of the soul. Likewise, the doctrine of karma is foreign to the gospel. Salvation comes from grace, not through the works in this life (Eph. 2:8-9) or in any other alleged past life. We will not be reborn after death. Hebrews 9:27 clearly teaches that “it is appointed for men to die once and after this come judgment.”

Finally, the Bible teaches absolute truth. God has clearly communicated to us his moral law (Ex. 20:1-17), which we are to obey. Contrary to the New Age teaching that “there are many paths to God,” Jesus clearly taught “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

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The New Age Movement

The New Age Movement. You’ve probably heard the phrase, and chances are you’ve heard it applied to everything from cartoon shows to environmental protection groups. Today we have “new age” radio stations, “new age” bookstores, and even “new age” churches, but a great deal of confusion remains about the New Age Movement. To begin with, the New Age Movement is not a conspiracy or a cult. It is a loose collection of very diverse people and groups. It is a religious trend, not a religious organization. Its broadness makes it rather difficult to define, but there are several beliefs that are distinctively “New Age.”

One of these beliefs is monism, the idea that all of reality is essentially one. You and I usually recognize differences between ourselves and between different objects in our world, but the monist sees everything as a single organic whole. From the monistic perspective, we are all part of one another; and, if God exists, we are all part of God.

Monism sounds very much like Eastern pantheism, and this similarity has caused many observers to describe the New Age Movement as the invasion of Eastern mysticism into Western culture. In fact, the New Age Movement has its historical roots in European philosophy. What we’re seeing is not the adoption of Eastern religion, but the bankruptcy of our own culture.

Let me explain. For centuries Christian theologians maintained that there were three sources of truth: revelation, tradition, and reason. One by one, the philosophers discarded revelation, ignored tradition, and concluded that reason was inadequate. The situation thus became a little scary. There weren’t any sources of authority left!

Humans don’t function very well without some source of authority, some source of hope. With no other place to turn, Western philosophers began to place their hopes in irrational ideas like monism,
believing that the problems and inconsistencies of life were more apparent than real and that these problems could be resolved at some deep level that we really can’t comprehend. These ideas provided the real foundation for the New Age Movement. It came about because Western philosophy had run out of answers.

All of that is simply to say this: The New Age Movement teaches some things that don’t make much sense. Its teachings violate Scripture, tradition, and reason. Its proponents are people who are desperately looking for hope and security in a world that seems very confusing. They have bought into the idea that we have no sure source of authority, and they are attempting to find answers in experience and in irrational ideals.

**Monism and Pantheism**

One of the most distinctive beliefs of the New Age Movement is monism, the belief that all of reality is essentially one. From this perspective, everything that exists is part of a single organic whole. There are no real differences between people, between objects, or between people and objects.

Monism seems very odd to most of us because our experience points to distinctions between ourselves and other people or between persons and objects. The New Age Movement, however, perceives logic and reason as limitations. Its adherents see commonly observed distinctions as illusions, and they believe we are led astray by what we would call “common sense.” For the New Age follower, we are all one with one another and, for that matter, with everything. When individuals come to the belief that they are one with the universe, a kind of conversion takes place. Shirley MacLaine’s experience in an Andean mineral bath illustrates the point. She writes,

> Slowly, slowly, I became the water . . . . I was the air, the water, the darkness, the walls, the bubbles, the candle, the wet rocks under the water, and even the sound of the rushing river outside.

Shirley MacLaine came to the conclusion that she was not herself a distinct entity, but that she was instead completely identified with all that surrounded her. This belief that everything is essentially one leads New Age followers to believe in pantheism, the idea that all is God. The unity of all reality tells them that everything is divine, including themselves. If all is one, then there are no distinctions, and all is God. Again, Shirley MacLaine writes, “I am God, because all energy is plugged into the same source. We are all individualized reflections of the God source. God is in us and we are God.”

From a New Age perspective, this concept is the key to unlocking one’s true potential, for to realize that you are God is to realize that you have no finite limitations. But there’s a problem with this claim. If God does not have limited knowledge or abilities, why would we have to grow in knowledge if we are God? Why would we even have to come to the conclusion that we are divine? If we are unlimited, why are we so limited that we do not always realize we are unlimited?

In addition, if all is essentially one, no real difference exists between good and evil. With no legitimate distinction between good and evil, New Age religious activity becomes an exercise in futility. What you do or don’t do doesn’t matter at all!

Finally, New Age pantheism stands in sharp contrast to the biblical doctrine of creation. Genesis 1 tells us that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God is not the same as His creation, but is utterly distinct from it as the Creator. Our place is not to ascend to His throne, but to bow down before it.
The Political Agenda of the New Age Movement

A consequence of New Age monism is a strong emphasis on the unity of our planet. This belief that everything is one was reinforced when astronauts photographed the Earth from outer space. The pictures didn’t look anything like our rapidly changing political maps. The barriers we had erected between nations were invisible, as were the wars taking place at the time. Only what we had in common was visible: a single planet and a fragile ecosystem. Peter Russell writes,

[This] picture has become a spiritual symbol for our times. It stands for the growing awareness that we and the planet are all part of a single system, that we can no longer divorce ourselves from the whole.

These pictures of the Earth from outer space are on New Age posters, bumper stickers, and T-shirts to remind us that we are all essentially one. We see this same idea in popular music as well-- the Grammy award-winning song “From a Distance” emphasizes the idea that when one stands back and looks at our planet “from a distance,” there is harmony, peace, and hope. There is global oneness.

This emphasis on globalism reflects the New Age desire to see the essential oneness of all reality manifested in our experience. The followers of the New Age want humanity to function as a “superorganism,” similar to a school of fish or a flock of birds, reacting to danger within a fraction of a second and behaving in such cooperation that we seem to have a common brain. Peter Russell writes,

No longer will we perceive ourselves as isolated individuals; we will know ourselves to be part of a rapidly integrating global network, the nerve cells of an awakened global brain.

This vision doesn’t stop with the Earth, for New Age followers believe that our world will network with other planets, then other galaxies, until the entire universe is in complete harmony as a single organism.

From this perspective, the interests of humanity are subordinated to those of the Earth as a whole. The important thing is not whether we ourselves survive, or even whether or not our Earth survives, but whether or not this evolutionary process continues to go forward. Particularly in light of the fact that many people become a part of the New Age Movement because they desire a positive message of hope, their expectation is ultimately a very sad and impersonal one. The individual is lost in the whole process, like a drop of water blending into a cosmic ocean.

Achieving Oneness

While all New Age followers look forward to global and universal oneness, they do not all agree on the means by which they expect that oneness to be achieved. Some focus on humanity’s technological potential for harmony, emphasizing advances in telecommunications and the sciences. Others pay more attention to the somewhat mystical idea that all things share the same essential energy. If we can tap into that energy we can use it to our advantage. Just as Luke Skywalker used “the Force” in the Star Wars movies to levitate objects and win battles, many New Age adherents believe they can control events around them through visualization and meditation. This belief goes far beyond using one’s perceived powers for personal gain. Their commitment to global and universal harmony causes New Age followers to focus their attention on transforming the world.
Here their belief that we share the same essential energy means that we can share the same consciousness.

One of the best illustrations of this concept is in the New Age fable of the “One-Hundredth Monkey.” As the story goes, a group of scientists taught an island monkey to wash his food in the water before he ate. Several other monkeys eventually mimicked his behavior, and before long nearly a hundred of the monkeys on that island had learned this same lesson. At that point, however, a strange thing happened. When the one-hundredth monkey began to wash his food, suddenly all of the monkeys of that species began doing the same thing, even those who had no contact with the monkeys in the experiment. The idea is that the one-hundredth monkey was enough to push this practice “over the edge” into a kind of cosmic consciousness.

New Age followers use this fable as a way of illustrating what they believe we can achieve with the human race. They maintain that they need only to reach this “critical mass” of enlightened individuals in order for their enlightenment to become the common consciousness of all humanity. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, for example, has said that if just 1 percent of the population were to practice the technique of Transcendental Meditation, the “Age of Enlightenment” could dawn.

This critical mass is what New Age followers were trying to achieve with the event they called the “Harmonic Convergence.” The Harmonic Convergence provided an opportunity for New Age adherents to channel their collective powers toward the common goal of world peace and harmony. The attempt to achieve this critical mass is also why so many cars have bumper stickers that read “Visualize World Peace.” The proponents of the New Age believe that world peace will actually be realized if enough people visualize it.

Witnessing to the New Age Follower

It is absolutely essential that Christians be sensitive to the philosophical perspective of New Age followers. We have seen that the New Age Movement reflects our culture’s rejection of revelation, tradition, and reason as authentic sources of truth. New Age followers will be completely turned off if we use reason with them to show them the error of their beliefs. From their point of view, such dependence on logic and reason does nothing more than demonstrate a profound lack of enlightenment on our part. In the same way, an appeal to the truth of Scripture or to the teachings of your church will seem rigid and insensitive. I’m not saying that we must avoid Scripture or logic; I’m simply saying that we need to be extremely cautious in the way we minister to the New Age follower.

Since the New Age Movement values experience so highly, it may well be that your personal testimony is the most helpful thing you can communicate to adherents of the New Age. They will usually dismiss your logic and your books, but their own beliefs prevent them from dismissing your experience. By demonstrating the reality of your Christianity and the transformation that the gospel has brought into your life, you appeal to them on their own terms.

Naturally, there’s something a little disconcerting about a testimonial approach. It means that you must have a more consistent testimony than their peers in the New Age. New Age seminars, for example, provide a great deal of personal support for those in attendance. Visitors feel welcome, they feel loved, and they want to come back just because the people are so friendly and attentive. Do we treat visitors that way in our churches? Do we treat our New Age friends with love and respect even though we disagree with their theology? If we give them rejection instead of encouragement, we’re driving them deeper into the New Age.

The greatest thing we can offer New Age followers is a secure sense of hope. I believe hope is what
they are looking for in the New Age Movement, but their thirst won’t be satisfied there. The New Age hope is insecure and impersonal, and the individual is ultimately not valued at all. Compare that “hope” to the promise of the Savior that nothing can separate us from His love, that nobody will ever snatch us from the hand of the Father, that one day He will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rom. 8:31-39; John 10:27-29; Rev. 21:4). What a difference! We need to demonstrate the reality of our hope and be prepared to explain how we have been made to feel so secure (1 Pet. 3:15).

The New Age Movement is very diverse, and it blends in easily with many other religions. One thing that it does not take in very well, however, is the cross of Jesus Christ. Your New Age friends will have a very difficult time accepting the idea that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ. That concept stands against everything they believe. Understand that they will probably not embrace the gospel quickly, but speak the truth in love. Through your words and through your lifestyle point them to Christ, who is our hope.

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