

# **The Kingdom of the Cults Study Guide**

**The Kingdom of the Cults by Walter Martin**

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## Plot Summary

Kingdom of the Cults gives an overview of cults and other religions from the perspective of Christianity. Cults, as defined by the book, are groups of people who meet around a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible. The cults described in the book, while very different in beliefs, do have some similarities. Many of the cults do not believe in Jesus' virgin birth, his incarnation as fully man and fully divine, his miracles, his death on the cross, his substitutionary sacrifice, his power to cleanse people from sin, or his bodily resurrection nor do many cults believe in the Trinity. All of these are foundational Christian doctrines.

Several cults deny the existence of man's fallen nature, hell, Satan, sin, evil, death, and the need for redemption. Some of the cult doctrines include unbiblical beliefs such as: God is all in all, man will be exalted to godhood, there is oneness in everything, God is an impersonal God, there is no need for prayer, and man can achieve salvation or enlightenment for himself. The founders of the various cults usually receive "a vision" and many go on to publish writings (which sometimes result in accusations of plagiarism). Some of the founders of the cults prove to be of corrupt character and have dealings with the law.

Many of the cults are very proactive in mission work to recruit more converts and have their writings published in a multitude of languages. The author gives suggestions for how Christians can share their faith with cult members with the first step being to read this book and educate themselves on the Word of God and the beliefs of those outside Christianity. The author stresses to Christians the importance of communicating love and sincerity to cult members.



# The Kingdom of the Cults

## The Kingdom of the Cults Summary and Analysis

The author begins by stating a cult is more than just any religious group not regarded as "normal." Rather, a cult is a group of people who meet about a specific person or person's misinterpretation of the Bible.

Each cult is said to have been started by one or two key people. Charles T. Russell and J.F. Rutherford formed the Jehovah's Witnesses. The Christian Scientists' doctrine was founded upon the writings of Mary Baker Eddy. The Mormons look to leaders Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. The Unity School of Christianity follows Charles and Myrtle Fillmore. It is said these cults have major differences with historical Christianity and yet declare themselves to be Christian.

The author of this book is a Baptist minister who believes all Scripture is true and without any error. He has taught Biblical Theology, Comparative Religion, and Apologetics. The approach of the book is to give historical analysis and theological evaluation while contrasting cults with biblical theology.

While some may believe any path to God is good, the Bible tells us Jesus said He is the way, the truth, and the life. The Bible tells us no man comes to the Father except through Jesus Christ. This claim is an absolute and gives no room for compromise. The author states we cannot leave behind the essentials of biblical Christianity as the cost for seeking unity with others.

Moreover, while man is free to reject Christ and the Bible as the Word of God, man cannot change the basic message of the Scriptures. In fact, Christ warned in the Bible that there will be false prophets and false Christs who deceive many people.

The author refers the reader to Matthew 7:15-23. This passage of Scripture says to be careful because false prophets can come in sheep's clothing. In other words, a person may seem gentle and pure but be evil and have bad intentions. Furthermore, the Bible states we will know people by their fruit—that is, what kind of life they are living. Finally, it states that not everyone will enter the kingdom of God.

There are 17 million cult members in the U.S. alone, yet Christianity statistically outpaces the kingdom of cults. However, across the world, especially in Latin America and third world countries, there is a dangerous exponential rise in other religions such as Islam and Buddhism.

The author states several reasons for his writing the book. First, to revive interest in Christian missionary efforts towards cults. Second, to point out fallacies in various cult systems. Third, to help Christians be able to answer cultists and present the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Fourth, to encourage a deep concern for the redemption of souls. Fifth, to



show the great heritage of the Christian faith. Finally, to challenge others to live for and witness for Christ.

The author gives an analogy of a bank teller and counterfeit money. Apparently, many bank tellers are given at least two weeks of training in recognizing the dollar bill and not once are they shown a counterfeit dollar. The reasoning is that if they witness a real dollar bill for such a long time, then they will easily detect counterfeit money. The author assumes this to be true for Christians—if they become familiar with their faith, they will be able to detect the counterfeit claims of cults and set them apart from biblical Christianity.

The Gospel (or Good News of Jesus Christ) can give the cultist something no cult can produce—peace with God and fellowship with the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ. The chapter concludes with the statement that cults take the truth, dilute it with human error and thereby twist it into something more deadly than a complete falsehood.



# Scaling The Language Barrier

## Scaling The Language Barrier Summary and Analysis

The author urges us to realize there is a language barrier between Christians and cultists. This means that, although they may be using the same terms, Christians and cultists define them differently. Readers are urged to take steps to overcome this barrier. First, to learn the terminology of the major cult systems. Christians must understand what cultists mean when they speak key words and standard doctrinal phrases. Second, to compare those definitions with the contexts of the biblical passages to which the cultist refers. Third, to review the importance of defining terms. One must understand what really matters the most to cultists in order to reach them. Finally, the Christian should testify to how Christ has changed them into a new person.

Since there have been changes in vocabulary over the years in the fields of technology, psychology, medicine, and politics, it should not be a surprise that terms have taken on new meanings in the religions of the world. In fact, cultists often take historically accepted meanings of biblical terms and freely change them into a vocabulary that is unbiblical. If Christians know how to properly use definitions, then cultists will not surprise or confuse them.

When Christians speak with cultists, they should keep in mind the cultist is most likely a person who is very familiar with Christian terminology. Cultists very carefully change the meanings of terms to fit the thoughts of their cult.

There are some issues and terms cultists tend to avoid. Cultists do not want to talk about the problem of evil, the existence of personal sin, or the need for Christ to die on the cross for our sins in order for us to have salvation of sin through grace and faith. However, cultists do like to quote the Bible and give the appearance they are agreeing with almost any statement a Christian makes. The author asserts that just as soon as a Christian says a biblical term, the cultist thinks of a "lightning-fast redefinition."

The author reiterates the several steps that need to be taken when a Christian encounters a cultist. First, the Christian should attempt to direct the conversation to the problem of terminology. Second, "definitions" can be compared with the contexts of the verses the cultist cites. Third, standard doctrinal terms like new birth, atonement, and eternal judgment should be defined. Next, the Christian should review why it is important to properly define terms. Finally, the Christian should present a clear testimony of change in his life through Christ.

The chapter ends by giving readers a "picture of cult semantics." First, understand the average cultist knows his own terminology very thoroughly. Second, well-trained cultists will try to avoid defining key terms having to do with core beliefs. Third, the Christian must find where the authority of Scriptures is compromised. Finally, the Christian must familiarize himself or herself with the terminology of the major cults.



# The Psychological Structure of Cultism

## The Psychological Structure of Cultism Summary and Analysis

The chapter begins with five major points. First, Christians should realize the belief systems of the cults tend to be characterized by close-mindedness and personal antagonism toward Christians. Second, cultic belief systems are said to manifest "institutional dogmatism" and intolerance for any position but their own. Third, the author urges Christians to become a source of "neutral, objective data." Next, it is the responsibility of Christians to communicate love and sincerity to those who have been almost isolated from the Christian message. Lastly, Christians should hold off from using any theological terms that could provoke the cultist to end all communication.

The author uses three religions to illustrate the point that different cults emphasize different things. Jehovah's Witnesses focus on eschatology and prophecy. Mormons emphasize priestly authority, secret rituals, signs, and symbols. Christian Scientists study metaphysical pantheism and physical healing.

Every belief system has psychological levels. First, the individual has a basic primitive outlook. Second, the individual decides whose authority he or she is willing to accept. Third, the individual's beliefs determine the details of the structure of their daily living.

In referring to cults, the author states their belief systems are characterized by closed mindedness (no interest in logical evaluation of the facts) and genuine hostility on a person level towards those who share a Christian message. If a cultist can accept a Christian on a personal basis, regardless of theological differences, this is when the possibility for meaningful conversation to take place.

The author argues Christian influence is strong under certain conditions. First, when the Christian shows every sign of not being prejudiced. Second, when the Christian appears to be reasonably learned. Third, when he or she shows genuine love and concern for the welfare of the cultist. Finally, when the Christian does not seem to have ulterior motives.

The belief systems of cults are said to manifest certain characteristics such as institutional dogmatism, pronounced intolerance for any position apart from the cult, authority figures who condition and control the minds of followers (creating a very real mental and emotional stronghold), and isolation from the Christian message. In addition, contradictory facts are denied. The book states that prophecies and doctrines have both errors and revisions (the Mormons herald revisions as divine revelation). Moreover, there is great hypocrisy within cults. For example, Mary Baker Eddy of the Christian Science Church spoke out against using doctors and drugs and insisted pain is not real, yet she herself was attended by doctors and given different treatments.





Each cult has their own way of conditioning followers to respond to the "outside world." Jehovah's Witnesses consider Christians to be "villains" and the object of "pure hatred." Mormons who convert to Christianity can lose their business in Mormon-dominated areas. Lastly, Christian Scientists claim matter has no true existence and they even deny the existence of evil. Thus, cultists are trained to be on guard around Christians and others with different beliefs.



# Jehovah's Witnesses and The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society

## Jehovah's Witnesses and The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society Summary and Analysis

The chapter begins with five general facts about the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses. First, they believe Jesus is not Jehovah God. Rather, he is the first and only direct creation of God and the agent through which Jehovah made all other things. Second, they believe true followers of Jesus worship the true and almighty God, Jehovah, who is not a Trinity. Third, Jehovah's Witnesses claim Jesus was raised from the dead, not with a physical body, but as a "mighty spirit creature." Fourth, they believe the second coming of Jesus already happened in 1914 and since then he has been an invisible spiritual presence. Lastly, the dead are said to exist only in God's memory and the wicked will not be punished with conscious torment (will not experience hell), but will be "extinguished" forever.

Charles Taz Russell, born in 1852 and spent his early years in Pennsylvania, is the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1879, he started the publication "The Herald of the Morning" which is now called "The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom" and circulates about 17.8 million copies worldwide each year. In 1886, he named his organization "Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society" which later became the "Jehovah's Witnesses."

Since Mr. Russell was the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, the author takes the time to point out his character issues. First, Russell controlled all the financial power of the Society and was not held accountable to anyone. Second, he is said to have taken every opportunity to make money and frequently was involved in legal battles, including one over his selling "Miracle Wheat" which he claimed would grow five times as much as any other brand of wheat. While in court, Mr. Russell perjured himself on more than one occasion. Third, in 1897, Mrs. Russell left her husband and sued for separation in 1903. Fourth, in many cases sermons were never delivered in places Mr. Russell claimed. In fact, Mr. Russell admitted to only attending school for seven years and leaving at the age of fourteen. Thus, his doctrines are not based on any sound educational knowledge. He was never ordained and only held a position as a minister in his own religious sect. Yet Russell claimed it was impossible to understand God's plan of salvation apart from his theology.

Judge Rutherford was the successor to founder Charles Taz Russell. The judge was responsible for changing the name of the Society to the Jehovah's Witnesses and in 1908 he moved headquarters to Brooklyn, New York at the Brooklyn Tabernacle. Rutherford had an ego similar Russell's. Rutherford claimed he was, "the mouthpiece of Jehovah for the age and God had designed his words as the expression of divine mandate." Rutherford wrote over one hundred books and pamphlets. While Russell's



writings had 15 or 20 million copies published over the course of sixty years, Rutherford did many times that in only half the time. In fact, his works have been translated into over 80 languages. Judge Rutherford died on October 31, 1916.

The author does not say much about the next President, Nathan Homer Knorr, who died in 1977 and was then replaced by Frederick Franz, who had been Knorr's vice president. Franz was succeeded by Milton Henschel in 1992 and the current president, Don Adams, began his position in the year 2000. The author does claim that with each succeeding president, the control of the Society grows stronger.

Since Russell was a proven perjurer and scholastic fraud, Jehovah's Witnesses today will likely deny any theological connection with Charles Russell, their founder and first president of the Watchtower and Tract Society. However, Jehovah's Witnesses publications constantly refer to him, quote him, and believe his teachings.

As of the end of 2001, the total membership in the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was 6,117,666. Door-to-door preaching is a big reason for its relatively huge following. Moreover, if all their magazine publications were combined, they print more than 832 million copies a year.

Over time, the Jehovah's Witnesses have gotten smarter about the way they do things. Since Rutherford's death, all society publications are issued without credit to any specific author. By publishing all work anonymously, it makes it impossible to evaluate the authors' qualifications, expertise, or authority in the areas they write about. Furthermore, to make it more difficult for lawsuits to succeed in gaining large financial settlements, in 2000 the Watchtower organization was divided into different corporations with individual presidents all reporting to a Governing Body presided over by President Don Adams.

The Jehovah's Witnesses engage in a number of activities. Members are expected to make lifelong commitments. Baptism by immersion occurs at the local congregation level. Fieldwork training is provided. The congregations meet in "Kingdom Halls" for five meetings a week. Each Kingdom Hall has a presiding overseer, who answers to the circuit overseer, who reports to the district overseer. Jehovah's Witnesses are not allowed to celebrate any religious, national, or cultural holidays during the year except the one-day ceremony called the Memorial of Christ's Death, which is held on Passover Day. None of the Watchtower workers, including full time employees, receive any salary.

The author labels the organization as having "structural authority" and being an "absolute autocracy." All authority is vested in the Governing Body. Jehovah's Witnesses are excluded from membership if they question any of the teachings and authority of the Society. They are not allowed to read any material contrary to their teachings. They are told to disassociate from anyone who is not a witness and who attempts to present a contrary view. Jehovah's Witnesses are not allowed to study the Bible on their own or to interpret or teach directly from the Bible. Rather, the teaching must come from approved Watchtower publications about the Bible.



The author asserts that many Watchtower statements contain a "mixture of truth and error." Jehovah's Witnesses make Jesus Christ "a god" who is not "coeternal with God." Christians believe in One God with three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:26 says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Philippians 2:5-11 talks of Jesus being equal with God. The author argues Jehovah's Witnesses have no problem changing Scripture to fit their doctrine. They claim that in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, and the Word was God," the last part should really read, "The Word was a god." Jehovah's Witnesses also deny the Holy Spirit's personality and deity yet in Acts 5:34 the Bible says the Holy Spirit is God.

The Watchtower's "translation" of the Bible is called the New World Translation (NWT). It was first published in 1950 and has been revised several times. None of its translators are known to have recognized degrees in Greek or Hebrew exegesis or translation. The author believes they alter passages and give them a new interpretation so they do not threaten their theology. For example, the Jehovah's Witnesses substitute "breath" for Spirit in the NWT.

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe Christ is not coming because He is already here invisibly and has been here since 1914. Today they downplay the significance of 1914 because they claimed Armageddon would happen in the lifetime of those born by 1914.

Since the deity of Jesus Christ is one of the cornerstones of Christianity, the author argues it has been "attacked more vigorously throughout the ages than any other single doctrine of the Christian faith." The book of Isaiah tells us a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel which means, "God with us." Jehovah's Witnesses believe Christ is a mighty God, but not the Almighty God (Jehovah). To translate it as "a god" is incorrect grammar and poor Greek. The substitution of one word for another in translation compromises scholastic integrity. Philippians 2:11 states that every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord.

The Jehovah's Witnesses deny the bodily resurrection of Christ and claim He was raised a "divine spirit being." They argue He took human forms as he needed to in order to be seen. They believe Jesus did not appear in the same form that he did while he hung on the cross. Yet, in Luke 24:34, the Lord said he was not a spirit but flesh and bones. Christians believe Jesus Christ became the one blood sacrifice for sin, ensuring everlasting life. However, Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Atonement is not wholly of God, but half God and half man. They argue the work is not fully committed until after Armageddon. This contradicts John 1:29 which says the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. Though the Jehovah's Witnesses claim Christ will not return physically, Matthew 24:30 tells us that when the Lord returns with his saints, every eye shall see him and Zechariah 14:4 reveals Christ as touching the Mount of Olives at his visible return.

The Jehovah's Witnesses refuse to pay homage to the flag of any nation or even to defend their own nation from assault by any enemy. The author points out that in



Romans 13:1-7, Paul clearly outlines the case for human government as instituted by God.

Jehovah's Witnesses interpret hell as "the grave." They conceive of death as being unconsciousness or extinction. Yet in John 11:26, Jesus tells us that whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Several times in Matthew it states there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth." So Christians believe hell is a conscious separation from God where real torment exists.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe Satan will be annihilated, but the author says the Bible tells us Satan must and will endure everlasting torment. While Jehovah's Witnesses argue the soul is not an eternal entity, the author cites several verses from the Bible (Genesis 35:18, I Kings 17:21-22, and Revelation 6:9-11) as teaching us that the soul leaves the body at death and is not destroyed by physical death. II Corinthians 5:1-9 states when a believer in Jesus Christ dies, they are absent from the body and present with the Lord. While the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that only 144,000 faithful servants will rule with King Jesus in heaven, Christians interpret the 144,000 to stand for the twelve tribes of Israel.

The author goes on to look at six terms: "only begotten," "greater," "born again," "death," "firstborn," and "soul and spirit" to demonstrate the difference between what Jehovah's Witnesses believe and what Christians believe. The author concludes Jehovah's Witnesses "thrive on confusion" and are not above neglecting to inform prospective converts who they really are if it will help them win some to their cause.



# Christian Science

## Christian Science Summary and Analysis

The chapter begins with five general facts about what Christian Scientists believe. First, God is a divine principle. Second, Jesus is not God and the incarnation and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ did not occur. Third, Scripture is not inerrant. Fourth, sin, death, and evil do not exist. Lastly, there is no literal, physical existence of the material universe.

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder, was born in New Hampshire in 1821. She had frequent illnesses, both emotional and physical, until the age of 22. In 1843, she married George W. Glover who died of yellow fever seven months later. This left Eddy widowed, pregnant, and highly emotional and unstable. She is said to have relied on morphine from time to time throughout her remaining years. In 1853, she married Dr. Daniel M. Patterson, a dentist. She later divorced him. At age 56, she married Asa G. Eddy who died of coronary thrombosis. Mary contested the autopsy and her own physician said he died of arsenic poisoning. However, that physician, Dr. C.J. Eastman, was found to be running a virtual abortion mill and had no medical credentials whatsoever to justify his title and went to prison for ten years. She wrote a letter to the Boston Post in 1882 accusing some of her former students of mentally poisoning her late husband. The author finds this a pathetic example of Mrs. Eddy's mental state.

The Father of Christian Science is Dr. Phineas Parkhurst Quimby. In the late 1850s, he called his system of mental healing, "The Science of Man." He was the first to use the terms "Science of Christ" and "Christian Science." When he died, Eddy claimed the terminology as her own. She also plagiarized him and several others in her book, "Science and Health With Key To The Scriptures." Although she stole some of his work, she did not agree with all of his conclusions.

Eddy has her own explanation for how she "discovered" Christian Science. After a fall on a slippery sidewalk, in the year 1866, she said Dr. Cushing gave her three days to live. She said on the third day that she read Matthew 9:2 and rose completely healed. However, Eddy was not ever in danger of losing her life in the way she described and she never "rose" the third day healed and free. Dr. Cushing denied under oath he ever believed her physical condition was serious.

By 1896, her churches and societies numbered over 400 hundred, despite the fact she was grossly ignorant of biblical history, theology, philosophy, and ancient languages, according to Rev. J.H. Wiggin, her literary advisor. She made a great effort to be deified and accumulate wealth. She required all Christian Scientists to circulate and sell as many of her books as they could and she threatened they would lose membership if they did not sell her published works. At her death, Eddy's personal fortune exceeded three million dollars and none was left to charity. To this day, Christian Scientists have



no problem adding Eddy's writings to the Bible and regarding it as having equal divine authority.

Christian Scientists affirm the Bible is God's Word and claim their whole religion is based upon the teaching of the Scripture, yet Christians see contradictions between what Christian Scientists teach and what the Bible says. For example, Christian Scientists claim the Bible has lies in it because man tampered with the divine record. Yet II Timothy 3:16 tells us all Scripture is given by inspiration from God. Moreover, John 17:17 says, "Thy word is truth."

Christian Scientists also deny the Trinity. Christians believe the Holy Spirit, part of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit), is a person who teaches us, speaks to us, thinks and makes decisions, and moves us to do the will of God. Christian Scientists say that as a man, Jesus was not God. In contrast, Christians see Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

Christian Scientists believe God is all in all. Eddy interchangeably used the following terms: divine principle, life, truth, love, soul, spirit, substance, intelligence, mind, Mother, and God. She claimed God is impersonal, and without personality. The author uses several passages of Scripture to show why Christians believe God can remember, speak, hear, see, create, know, judge the world, and be a personal Spirit with a will.

According to the author, while the Christian has a personal relationship with God, prays through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, and relies on personal contact with God as the source of peace, the Christian Scientist has no such contact, no real spiritual life, and no peace.

Eddy asserts the sick are healed "knowing there is no sickness." The author tells us Eddy boldly claimed she healed all types of diseases yet she has no names, dates, or witnesses and she was not able to heal the diseases of her close friends and family members. Eddy appears to have contradicted her own teachings to deny sickness since she herself used doctors.

According to the Christian Scientist, Jesus did not perform supernatural miracles. Christians believe Christ was fully divine and fully human and he performed miracles to meet human needs (not "illusions.") Christian Scientists also argue Jesus' blood did not cleanse anyone from sin. Christians believe they are saved by grace alone, through faith that the blood of Christ cleansed them from all sin (see Romans 3:25, I John 1:7, I Peter 1:18-19, Romans 5:6, Hebrews 9:22, and Revelation 1:5).

Christian Scientists will tell you Jesus did not die on the cross—He was still alive. However, the author argues the death of Christ upon the cross is more substantiated than His birth (by both biblical and secular history). Joseph of Arimathaea requested His dead body from Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:58). The Bible tells us Christ died upon the cross (see Romans 5:6 and John 19:33).

Christian Scientists believe evil is an illusion and has no real basis since God or Good is all that really exists. However, they have to account for the origin of the idea of evil.



Christian Science offers no eternal life or salvation for the soul because it denies sin and the need for redemption. Christians look to chapter three of the book of Romans, which says all have sinned and no one is righteous.

Eddy and Christian Science also deny the existence of Satan and refer to him as "another elusive personification." The author gives Bible verses to support the Christian argument that the Lord announced He had come to destroy the works of the devil. Satan was a powerful angel who wanted to take the throne from God. Satan and the fallen angels were then driven from heaven. Christians believe this began all evil or sin (which they define as anything which opposes the Will of God.) Satan succeeded in corrupting Adam and Even and all future generations.

Eddy claimed death is an illusion. Heaven is harmony—infinite, boundless bliss. Man as God's idea is already "saved with an everlasting salvation". One sacrifice is insufficient to pay the debt of sin. Eddy dismissed Christ's sacrifice as unnecessary.

According to the Christian Scientist, prayer does not change God. Eddy thought prayer to a personal God would actually hinder spiritual growth. The author tells us the Bible commands us to pray without ceasing (I Thessalonians 5:17). Furthermore, Jesus told the Father He knew He was always listening (Matthew 26:41-42).

Christian Scientists believe there is no life, truth, intelligence, or substance in matter. Man originated from Spirit. Christians look at Genesis 2:7 which says God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul.

The author does not understand how Christian Scientists can deny their teachings are opposite of what Jesus taught since they deny physical existence and the reality of matter, deny hell and Satan, deny sin, and deny the need for redemption. Eddy herself was a materialist who thoroughly enjoyed all the material comforts she derived from denying their very existence.

In the 1960's, Christian Science (CS) was significantly losing members and income at a steady rate. In the 1970's, members and even the media were aware of the long-term decline. In 1976, there was a scandal with charges of financial, moral, and spiritual corruption among its top leaders. However, by the 1980's the cult regrouped its forces, eliminated dissenting membership, and reduced financial waste. Today, the public image is of a thoughtful, spiritually mature Christian denomination with an intellectual faith that gives followers peace with God without any of the unappealing aspects of traditional Christianity (such as the existence of hell and sin).

However, the Christian Science Monitor has not turned a profit since 1961, with losses in excess of \$250 million. In 1997, it had a circulation of only 73,000, but now a popular electronic version is able to millions online. A television venture begun in 1986 was abandoned in the middle of 1992 after losing \$235 million. Despite the financial setbacks, the author tells us Christian Science maintains members about North



America, Northern Europe, and better educated, more Westernized people of other countries.

Most major university campuses have chapters of Christian Science organizations. Each branch church maintains a Christian Science Reading Room available to the public. The "Mother" Church, First Church of Christ, Scientist, is headquartered in a complex on fourteen acres in Boston, Massachusetts. In 2002, there were two thousand churches worldwide. Unlike Jehovah's Witnesses, they do not aggressively recruit new members. It is estimated they have between 150,000 and 400,000 followers. A five-member Board of Directors governs the Christian Scientists. The current President is J. Thomas Black. To this day, all spiritual authority is vested in Mary Baker Eddy, and not in any other Presidents.



# Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons)

## Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons) Summary and Analysis

The Mormons believe the Bible is the Word of God as long as it is "correctly translated." The three other sacred books in their religion are: The Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and The Pearl of Great Price.

The Mormons believe the earth is one of several inhabited planets ruled by gods and goddesses who were former humans on other planets. Humankind is considered the same species as God. God begot all humans in heaven as offspring of his wife or wives, who were sent to earth to eventually attain godhood.

The Trinity consists of three gods born in different times and places. Mormons believe Jesus came from God the Father and Mary having sexual relations. Yet in Matthew 1:18, the Bible says the Lord was conceived by a direct act of God the Holy Spirit.

Salvation is about being exalted to godhood to have eternal life in the celestial heaven, but it must be earned through: faith in Christ, baptism by immersion, obedience to the teaching of the Mormon Church, good works, and keeping the commandments of God. There is no mention for the need of the shedding of blood for the remission of sin found in Hebrews 9:22. In fact, Mormons claim Jesus shedding His own blood on the cross did not have the power to cleanse some sins. Christians believe salvation comes from being justified and redeemed by grace alone from faith in Christ and that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

There are two major groups of Mormons. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is based in Salt Lake City, Utah and has around 10 million members. The Community of Christ (who reject the name Mormon) is headquartered in Independence, Missouri, and has only 250,000 members.

In 2001, there were over sixty thousand active Mormon missionaries. They encourage young people to get involved with mission work. Approximately three hundred thousand people a year get converted to Mormonism. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir has 350 singers. There are 115 temples in operation. Members are required to tithe one-tenth of their income. The Mormon church collects about \$4.3 billion from its members each year. The church encourages members to also fast two meals on the first Sunday of every month and give that money to the church. Education ranks highly in Mormon circles. Brigham Young University, founded by Mormons, has 37,000 on two campuses. Mormons tend to have larger families than those outside their cult.



Mormons are also known for building great chapels and temples for ceremonies like marriages and baptisms for the dead. The church is directed by "General Authorities" and authority also resides in the Mormon priesthood. The author claims most Mormons are ignorant of the shady historical and theological sources of their religion.

The religion was started by Joseph Smith, Jr. He was born in Vermont in 1805. He and his father spent a lot of time digging for imaginary buried treasure. In 1820, he received a "vision" he had been chosen to restore true Christianity. Mormons claim they are the true Christians. In 1823, Smith claims the angel of Moroni came to his bedside. He did not write about it until some years later. Smith made the mistake of crediting the Book of Mormon to Nephi, not Moroni. In 1827, Smith was said to have received the golden plates the Book of Mormon was written on. For the next two years, he was busy translating the plates with Oliver Coudery as his scribe.

Smith said he and Coudery were initiated into the priesthood of Aaron by John the Baptist in Pennsylvania on May 15, 1829. Then, apparently, they were conferred by Peter, James, and John into the Melchizedek Priesthood. The author believes Mormons themselves do not have any priesthood because of their denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, but Christians believe in the universal priesthood of believers, which means each believer can pray directly to God.

Much of the church moved to Kirtland, Ohio and over a period of six years they increased their numbers to 16,000 souls. This was also the place Smith's notorious practice of polygamy was instituted (in 1890, Mormon President Wilford Woodruff abolished it). Later Smith relocated to Jackson County, Missouri and bought 63 acres he declared as "holy ground." The Church of Christ, Temple Lot, is a small branch of Mormonism that now owns it. From 1831-1844 the "prophet" (Smith) received over 135 direct revelations from God.

The Mormons also grew and prospered in Nauvoo, Illinois. This is where the Mormons really became known for polygamy. Smith and brother Hyrum were put in jail and 200 people stormed the jail and on June 27, 1844, they were both violently murdered. Brigham Young took over leadership. In 1846, they abandoned Nauvoo. In 1847, the valley of the Great Salt Lake became their home. Each succeeding president claims the same authority as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Mormons have a shameful history of elevating "white" races as supreme and demeaning African-Americans and Native Americans as "unrighteous." Apparently they believed dark skin was a curse by God.

The Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. spoke out against the archaeological claims of the Book of Mormon and the cities mentioned in the book are said to be imaginary. Since the Book of Mormon was published in 1830, it has been revised or "corrected" many times. The author devotes a section of the chapter to cover corrections, contradictions, errors, and the plagiarism in this book. Smith was said to have lacked a lot of information and background on the subject of world history and the history of the Jewish people.



Mormons have never accepted the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. They claim God the Father is merely a man while the Bible tells us God the Father does not have a body of flesh and bones (see John 4:24 and Luke 24:39). They call Jesus—Jehovah God—and consider him to be a lesser God. They believe the Holy Spirit to be immaterial.

Mormons believe the gods who created this earth planned for Adam and Eve to sin and they intended man to one day eventually reach godhood. They also believe Lucifer (Satan) was a spirit brother of Jesus who fell from heaven because of his jealousy of Christ.

Mormons believe when Christ returns, the Jews will have been gathered to Palestine and, by a miracle, the Mormons will be in Missouri. In their minds, the judgment of the Lord will be poured out upon the earth, except upon old and new Jerusalem.

Mormons believe in three heavens. The telestial heaven is where most people, who have acted sinfully, will go. The terrestrial heaven is for Christians who did not accept Mormonism or for Mormons who did not meet church requirements or for moral people of other religions. The highest heaven is celestial heaven where godhood can be attained.

The author refers to Mormonism as, "a polytheistic nightmare of garbled doctrines draped with a garment of Christian terminology." Mormons like to appear to be Christians, but believe very different things.



# Spiritism

## Spiritism Summary and Analysis

Spiritism is by far the oldest religious cult in existence today. Spiritism teaches the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of men. Spiritists believe in continuous existence and a path of endless progression. They believe in the communion of spirits and ministry of angels. They also attribute great personal responsibility for the way they live their lives. Spiritists believe people will be compensated for their actions and receive retribution in the hereafter for the good and evil they did on Earth.

Spiritism, which has millions of followers, has a bigger worldwide movement than in the United States. The author calls Spiritism a "masquerade of demonic forces." It may appeal to people that there is life after death, reunion with loved ones, and contact with and information from people beyond the grave. The Bible, however, in Exodus 22:18 and Leviticus 20:27, orders the death penalty for all sorcerers.

Modern Spiritism came about on March 31, 1848, when Mrs. John Fox in Hydesville, New York heard noises in the upstairs rooms and cellar of her home. Margaret and Kate Fox developed into mediums. Andrew Jackson Davis was an early prophet who published writings that are still revered. In 1885, Mrs. Leonora Piper began a forty-year career as a spiritistic medium. In 1924, she conducted a special series of séances and there is a 3,000-page record of her accuracy. Professors did research and came to the conclusion that she knew answers to things she had no way of knowing. In the 1990s and beyond, the media greatly contributed to the growth of Spiritism.

The author claims the majority of such activity is fraudulent and the public is anxious to believe anything. Spiritism is to be found everywhere. It teaches life is continuous and man lives eternally, progressing toward perfection in the spirit realm. Spiritism, whether legitimate or fraudulent, is a big money maker.

Spiritists use demonic powers to make contact with those beyond this earth. The author reassures Christians that demonic forces can never possess them because they are shielded and protected by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Spiritists disagree with almost every historic doctrine of the Christian faith. They do not believe in the authority of the Bible, do not regard Jesus as divine, do not accept the doctrines of the Trinity, do not believe in the miraculous conception of Christ, do not teach the atonement and resurrection of Christ, do not think anyone is naturally "bad", and do not believe in hell. They do believe that even the most troublesome individual can over time reach perfection.



# The Theosophical Society (Gnosticism)

## The Theosophical Society (Gnosticism) Summary and Analysis

Theosophy comes from the Greek term "theosophia," which means "divine wisdom." This religion teaches a pantheistic view of the world and an impersonal God. Followers try to embrace religious, philosophical, and scientific truth as it is found in various sources. They believe in the essential "oneness" of all beings, throughout the cosmos, coming from one unknowable divine source. Plants, animals, humans, planets, and everything are considered alive and evolving.

Their God is an impersonal God unable to judge the actions of personal beings. They see no need for prayer to this impersonal God. The author uses Scripture to assert that God most assuredly does have a personality and He can remember, create, and know things and has a Will. The author wants to know how God can have no personality but create people with personalities.

Jesus Christ is not considered unique because Gnostics believe all men become Christs. They claim all men are innately divine and man is a god in the making.

Mahatmas or Masters tell people truths through reincarnated messengers, such as Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. Helena Blavatsky, born in 1875 in New York City, ruled the Theosophists during her lifetime and continues to influence others even after her death through her writings. Most loyal Theosophists regard her writing of *The Secret Doctrine*, to this day, as a divinely inspired interpretation. Annie Besant (1847-1933) was the most well known of British Theosophical luminaries.

The sacred teachings of Theosophy come from Hindu, Buddhist, and early Gnostic sources. The Bible is only used on a limited basis, if they believe they can interpret it to support Theosophical doctrine.

A theosophist was quoted as saying, "we must only experience religious truth for ourselves in a subjective way." This means they believe everyone has the ability to discern their own reality and everyone follows their own unique path.

To the Theosophist, salvation comes from reincarnation, through which character is developed and individuals progress. There is no forgiveness of sin except through reincarnations. The author discusses Scripture that shows reincarnation is not man's destiny nor is it God's plan for perfecting the souls of man.

Theosophists also deny the fallen nature of mankind and the substitutionary sacrifice Christ made dying on the cross for our sins. The author reminds us that Jesus takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).



Theosophy does not require loyalty to any particular religion or leader. The Theosophical Society is headquartered in Wheaton, Illinois and internationally represented in Adyar, Madras in India. They have publications, seminars, lectures, correspondence, and classes.

According to the author, those who follow Theosophy have no hope for the full redemption of sin. They only offer endless reincarnations and no relationship with a loving, personal heavenly Father. They ignore the nature, person, and world of the Lord Jesus Christ. Theosophists have no living redeemer, no freedom from the power of sin, and no hope for the world to come.



# Buddhism—Classical, Zen, and Nichiren Shoshu

## Buddhism—Classical, Zen, and Nichiren Shoshu Summary and Analysis

Classical Buddhism is one of the four major world religions with more than 350 million followers. This religion originated in the East and has now become popular in the West. Siddhartha Gautama, or Gautama Buddha, said man can achieve salvation and enlightenment for himself by following the Middle Path, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path. The ultimate goal is to reach Nirvana, a state where the self becomes extinguished in the Void (universal cosmic consciousness of a nonpersonal essence). Pali Tripitaka is thought to be the most reliable teachings of Buddha. Man suffers because his desires are focused on the illusion of self, which limits him to nonpermanence within the laws of Karma and reincarnation.

2500 years ago, Hinduism reigned supreme in India. The enslaving social caste system made reformers seek freedom from Hinduism. Gautama Buddha founded the Buddhist religion. He observed many contradictions and problems in life and decided to leave his wife and child to wander about searching for the truth. After seven years, he found the "true path" and "great enlightenment" and attained Nirvana (the soul is at last absorbed in the cosmic consciousness).

The Four Noble Truths are the truth of suffering (existence is pain), the truth of the cause of suffering (desire), the cessation of suffering (when suffering is destroyed, Nirvana is attained), and the truth of the way to remove suffering (the noble eightfold path). The eightfold path is: right belief, right resolve, right word, right act, right life, right effort, right thinking, and right meditation.

Buddhists do not believe in the existence of a personal God. Rather, they regard God as unknowable and not a person.

Mahayana Buddhism asserts the existence of a thousand Buddhas with a supreme God. Since AD 100, because of a schism, the Hinayana Buddhists continue to strictly adhere to the original tenets of Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism has more than eight million followers worldwide. They believe enlightenment comes with clarification and simplification. Reality is not objective, but subjective. Since they have no sacred books or dogmatic tenets, the author believes they teach nothing except whatever teachings come out of one's own mind. There is no God to worship, no ceremonial rites to observe, no future place to which the dead are destined. God is neither affirmed nor denied. Zen Buddhists bear the whole responsibility for their own actions. They deny the reality of sin, declaring an absence of an absolute standard. This means they reject the necessity of personal redemption from





the penalty of sin. Their reality is neither pure nor impure and they offer no truth. They reject the grace of God and the need of a Savior. Rather, they exalt and deify man. Man is supposed to look into one's own nature. Their ultimate goal is "freeing of the will." They believe love of self is first, last, and always.

Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism (NSB) is a religious group founded after the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, a Japanese reformer. Their goal is oneness with the essence of Buddha. God is all and all is God. Man is one with all existence and divine. They attribute the following attributes to Gohonzon (their Supreme God): the savior of mankind, the source of all divine help, the believer has faith in the Gohonzon, the only source of eternal good fortune, one must render it full devotion, it is the source of happiness, it is the ultimate source of the universe, it purifies believers, it forgives sin and answers prayer, it is omnipotent, and he holds the key to world peace and happiness.

To those who follow NSB, salvation comes from one's ability to recognize his own divinity and one's own efforts to remove the penalty of his own bad Karma via penance, chanting, and reincarnation. The author contrasts this with Christians who believe man cannot save himself and salvation has nothing to do with one's own works. The Christian finds forgiveness of sins through believe in Jesus Christ's atoning death on the cross. The doctrine of Karma is not found in the Bible. The author tells us, "man could not atone for his own sins if he had one thousand lifetimes." Christians do not look forward to rebirth but to resurrection.



# The Bahai Faith

## The Bahai Faith Summary and Analysis

For followers of the Bahai faith, the Bible is only one of many sacred texts. The final authoritative word is found in the writings of Baha'u'llah. He is said to have fulfilled a worldwide messianic calling, which put him equal with other world religion leaders.

They believe God is one person and they deny the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus is only one of nine manifestations of the divine mind: Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Christ, Mohammed, Krishna, Lowe, and Baha'u'llah. Apparently, God had not fully revealed himself in any one of the manifestations but through all of them. Bahai finds all these leaders to have held the same basic morals and spiritual values. The author does not see how they can be compared given the religious leaders have contradictory teachings.

Salvation is based upon man's good works and God's mercy. They do not regard the blood of Jesus to be capable of cleansing anyone of sin. They also deny Jesus was born of a virgin, was God incarnate, and rose bodily from the grave.

The Bahai cult began in Iran in the nineteenth century by Mirza Ali Muhammad. This man considered himself to be a divine manifestation in time and space who would lead mankind to a new era. He was referred to as "Bab." Islamic fanatics murdered him in 1850. Mirza Husayn'Ali took over when Bab was killed. He was the Bahullah who regarded himself as playing the role of Christ to Bab's John the Baptist. He left behind two hundred books and tablets.

The religion is headquartered in Haifa, Israel. There is a Bahai temple in Wilmette, Illinois that uses the number nine to represent the nine living world religions. The structure has nine sides, nine pillars, nine avenues, nine gates, and nine fountains to emphasize the unity of all the great religions of the world.

The faith claims the religious leaders of the world have forgotten their common origin. They stand for the oneness of God or oneness of religion and humanity. Bahai seeks to bring together all faiths into a brotherhood. Man should be able to agree to disagree on "peripheral issues" with the chief aim being unity on all the great foundational truths of the world religions. Those of the Bahai faith are supposed to pray and read Holy Writings from various religions daily and to observe certain holidays.

Bahai followers accept the fact no one is perfect, but do believe man can arrive at eventual salvation. They do not believe in hell, but they do believe in paradise. They claim it is presumptuous to say you know you will be in heaven when you die. The author argues this cult picks and chooses what it wants to follow out of the Bible so it will best fit their theology. Followers in this cult may feel they are superior to other religions.

The author believes there can be no harmony of all world religions. Furthermore, this cult rejects many of the central truths in Christianity: the absolute authority of the Bible, the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, His Virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection, and the second coming.



# Unitarian Universalists

## Unitarian Universalists Summary and Analysis

The Unitarian Universalist Association embraces religious pluralism and tolerance of all faiths. They do not regard any sacred books as absolute or infallible. Many Universalists do not believe in God at all and, of those that do, there is a plethora of different views about God.

Universalists do agree God is not a Trinity. They reject the miracles of Jesus Christ, His Virgin Birth, bodily resurrection, and Christ's divinity. Some think Jesus was a great moral teacher while others do not.

Universalists do not accept the need for salvation from sin. In their eyes, people are basically good and do not need a savior to deliver them from sin. They believe people can save themselves with good moral character. They focus on the here and now and reject the doctrine of hell.

Faustus Socinus, born in 1539, was an Italian who migrated to Poland. He started the beginnings of Unitarianism with his anti-Trinitarian party. John Biddle (1615-1662) is called the Father of English Unitarianism and his writings attempt to prove the Trinity is not biblical or logical. William Ellery Channing (1780-1842) is called the Apostle of American Unitarianism and he founded the American Unitarianism Association in 1825.

These classic Unitarians affirmed the authority of the Bible. However, nineteenth century transcendentalism replaced Scripture with intuition and substituted the authority of Christ with the sovereignty of self. The twentieth century humanists agreed with evolution, supported science and reason, and founded their ethical values on a human (not divine) basis.

In its current state, Unitarianism has not held so tightly to humanism. Rather, baby boomers are more focused on spiritual things. Intellectual sermons on the greatness of human reason have been replaced with a New Age emphasis on the harmony of earth, mind, and spirit.

Evangelism used to be looked at as threatening the ideals of tolerance and pluralism. Now there is a new evangelistic thrust with Rev. Scott Alexander leading the way. He is the senior minister of the 2,000 member Church of the Larger Fellowship in Boston.

Unitarians are supportive of left-wing social causes and have gained media coverage for their social agendas. There are at least 222,000 members worldwide. Followers tend to be Americans, college graduates, and those with higher incomes.

# Scientology

## Scientology Summary and Analysis

L. Ron Hubbard was born on March 13, 1911 in Tilden, Nebraska. He was a popular science fiction writer in the 1930's and 40's. He wrote Dianetics and found a new career in writing self-help and religious books. Dianetics became very popular as Hubbard shared his "science of the mind" and the belief man is basically good.

He actually claimed the best way to make a million dollars would be to start his own religion. A year after he made the statement, he wrote his first book on Scientology in 1951. The Church of Scientology of California began in 1954 and there are now six million adherents.

Scientology acknowledges God or gods may exist, but each person must decide for himself. They see Christ as a legend that pre-existed earth-life on other planets and was put into the ideas of man on earth. Jesus, in their view, is no greater than Buddha or Moses. Reincarnation explains man's existence. Scientology is about gaining freedom from reincarnation. Man is regarded as basically good and eventually he can become a godlike, known as "homo novis."

Most Scientology writings do not mention God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, or salvation. Truth is considered subjective and knowledge of the self is called truth. Scientology describes deity as Supreme Being, God, and gods. Members are free to choose their concept of God. Each person has the goal of knowing the Divine Nature in and for himself.

Hubbard was raised on a small ranch near Helena, Montana. Because his father was in the navy, he and his family frequently traveled abroad. The following biographical claims Hubbard makes about himself have been disputed: that he traveled extensively in Asia; that he was crippled and blind at the end of World War II and then resumed his studies and recovered fully; that he was twice pronounced dead; that he achieved a perfect score in 1950 on mental and physical fitness reports; and that he completed his academic degrees.

Hubbard's first two marriages ended in disaster. His second wife sued him for divorce in 1951 because it was a bigamous marriage since his first marriage was not legally dissolved until one year after his second marriage. She claimed sleep deprivation, beating, strangulation, and Hubbard advising her to commit suicide.

Hubbard's third wife, Mary Sue Hubbard, was the mastermind behind a sinister covert operation against the United States. She and four others were each sentenced to five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine. L. Ron Hubbard and twenty-four other scientologists were named coconspirators, but not indicted.



Hubbard says man's mind is made up of three things. The analytical part is the perfect computer that never makes a mistake. The reactive part works on a stimulus/response basis and holds mental images. The somatic part keeps the body regulated and functioning. The reactive is said to interfere with the analytical. Everything taken in by the senses is recorded by the reactive mind as the "engram." Engrams have been collected from past lives since man began his journey sixty trillion years ago. The way to prevent the reactive mind from interfering with the analytical mind is to rid the reactive mind of all engrams so the person is "clear." The "clear" person is on the evolving path to the next stage of man, a godlike being called homo novis. Hubbard claims his results are scientifically valid and based upon clinical study.

Hubbard rejects the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. He regards man as part God and able to attain a "godlike" nature. Scientologists use the term "rebirth" instead of reincarnation. Salvation is defined as being free from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. The way to salvation is to erase engrams.

The Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation taught three courses in Dianetics in 1950. The Thetan is the eternal entity, which reincarnates into interplanetary life forms. The Thetan is more than eighty trillion years old and dwells somewhere within a person's skull. When a person dies, the Thetan reports to an implant station before being shot down to earth. There are eight dynamics of life, according to Hubbard: self, sex, group, mankind, other life forms, MEST (matter, energy, space, thing), spirits, and a Supreme Being. A Thetan can control MEST by operating independently from his own body.

The worldwide headquarters for Scientology is Clearwater, Florida. They have a successful anti-drug program and criminal rehabilitation program as well as a "nonreligious" moral education program. Scientology even has a Celebrity Center for its famous followers. The beliefs of Scientology are in no way supported by the Bible.



# The Unification Church

## The Unification Church Summary and Analysis

The Unification Church does not regard the Bible as trustworthy or reliable. They see God as dualistic in His nature, like the yin and yang of Taoism. The crucifixion of Jesus is said to be an alternative plan that only saved mankind halfway. They believe Sun Myung Moon is the Messiah and true salvation comes by being a member of the Unification Church.

The Unification Church was founded and led by Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who was born in Korea. This cult appeals to educated young people from the middle class. The author considers the Unification Church to be the Westernization of Eastern religious ideas. Members are pressured to confirm and remain loyal to the group at all costs. Moon is their new Messiah, sent to bring about the perfect family on earth.

On January 6, 1920, Yong Myung Moon was born to Confucian parents. The family later converted to the Presbyterian Church. In his early teen years, Moon tried to contact his ancestors in the spirit world. He said he received a vision of Jesus Christ at age 16 on the Easter morning of April 17, 1936. He repeatedly claimed this date as his messianic calling, yet April 17 in 1936 was a Friday, not Easter Sunday. He also testified he had met Jesus, Moses, and Buddha.

Moon claimed he asked Satan about the fall of Adam and Eve. Eve supposedly had sex with Satan and passed the sin onto Adam through sex. Moon's church was involved in a strange sexual "blood cleansing" rite where a woman was to have sex with Moon to cleanse her blood from Satan's lineage. Then the cleansed woman could cleanse her husband through sex. There were rumors of Moon's marriages, bigamy, and promiscuous sexual affairs. As Moon's arrest records became known from the past, the rite was abandoned. Moon married his current wife Hak Ja Han in 1960 when he was 40 and she was 17. Unification members call her "Mother". Together Moon and his wife are known as the True Parents. She gave birth to thirteen "sinless" children.

He spent millions of dollars to have a rally in New York's Yankee Stadium and at the Washington monument. Moon has three million followers worldwide and there are 900 worship centers in Korea and 55 in the United States. His biggest concentration of members is in Japan.

In 1983, Moon went to jail for tax evasion. He is also believed to have used deceptive tactics in fund-raising, giving names of false charities to gain sympathy and financial contributions. Moon receives tens of millions of dollars each year in charitable donations from Japan, United States and Europe. He has 335 businesses outside the United States and another 280 in the United States.



Apparently, it was necessary for another messiah to come to finish Jesus' incomplete work by finding the perfect bride, marrying, and establishing a God-centered family through which sinless children could be born. Any wedding blessed by Moon means the couple is cleansed and can bear sinless children.

According to Moon, God consists of dual characteristics and has an internal essence that is both male and female and both positive and negative (like the yin and yang). Moon does not consider the Bible to be all truth, but insists it contains some truth. Moon claims to believe in the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Complete Testament (or his Divine Scripture) that is the authoritative Scripture and considered superior to the Bible. The Unification Church does not believe in the doctrine of the Trinity.

In accordance with pantheism, God is said to be invisibly in everything. Moon asserts Lucifer and the angels worked with God to create all things in the universe. By contrast, Christians believe Jesus created all things.

Moon makes all men equal in divinity to Jesus. Moon considers the vicarious atonement, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus to be an unplanned mistake while Christians believe it was the foreordained plan of God in redeeming lost sinners. According to Moon, God's real purpose in sending Jesus was for him to find a bride, marry, and produce sinless children.

Moon says the Holy Spirit is the female aspect of God and became the spiritual bride of Jesus. Moon believes that, as the Lord of the Second Advent and the Second Messiah, he establishes the foundation for physical salvation. Moonies pray in the name of the True Parents. God, Mr. Moon, and Mrs. Moon form a new "trinity."





# Eastern Religions

## Eastern Religions Summary and Analysis

There is no single Hindu concept of God. All souls are eternal and must take responsibility for their own actions. Karma is the debt of one's bad actions for which one must atone in order to escape the cycle of samsara. Samsara refers to reincarnation (the soul inhabits successive human bodies) and transmigration (the soul inhabits successive bodies—human or animal or inanimate objects).

Hinduism denies the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the Atonement, sin, and salvation by grace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Hinduism replaces resurrection with reincarnation and substitutes grace and faith with human works.

The most well known Hindu branches include Rajneeshism, ISKCON (Hare Krishnas), and Transcendental Meditation (TM). Americans started developing a popular interest in Eastern things in the 1960's and 70's. Today, Eastern influence can be found throughout Western society. There are hundreds of cults, both large and small, in America with Eastern ideas and practices.

Hinduism has evolved over the last five thousand years. It came from a desire to synthesize different religious ideas and influences from India. Hindu Scriptures were collected over hundreds of years. The Vedas is the most well-known part of the Bhagavad-Gita and was written between 200 BC and AD 200.

There are three main Hindu sects. The abstract monists emphasize the philosophical oneness of the universe. Vishnuites are devoted to worshiping the god Vishnu as the supreme form of divinity while Shivaites are devoted to worshiping the god Shiva as the supreme form of divinity.

Since there is not one central idea of God, there are many Hindu concepts. Monism is the belief all existence is one substance. Pantheism is the argument all existence is divine. Monotheism is the view there is only one God. Those who agree with animism think gods live in nonhuman objects. Polytheists believe in many gods. Followers of henotheism say they worship one God among many.

There are several views of the way to salvation. Karma marga is the way of disinterested action. Bhakti marga is the way of devotion through sacrifice and discipline. Lastly, jhana marga is the path of knowledge or mystical insight.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh started Rajneeshism. He gained a following via his use of nudity and free sex as well as his incorporation of popular therapies and techniques. He has a multimillion-dollar corporation, Rajneesh Foundation International, which sells his books, diaries, and videos. His life was threatened so he left Poona, India. In 1981, he purchased the Big Muddy Ranch in New Jersey so his cult could attempt to build a paradise. In 1983, Rajneesh published his vision of a worldwide crisis he insisted would



happen between 1984 and 1999 and would mean every kind of destruction on earth. Obviously, his prediction proved wrong. However, by 1984, Rajneesh had 359,000 followers.

Rajneesh perceives himself as a Savior. He is hostile to Christians because he is adamant nobody is a sinner, you cannot lose your divinity, and there was no resurrection of Christ. Rajneesh was expelled from the United States by INS in 1985 and returned to his religious community in India where he died in 1990.

ISKCON stands for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and it began in New York City in the 1960's. Chaitanya was a man who taught Krishna was the supreme personality of the godhead. ISKCON is well known for its fundraising activities and a Governing Body Commission of thirty top leaders leads it worldwide. The Bhagavad-Gita is their most sacred scripture. They believe Jesus is Krishna's Son, but no more special to God than any other man could strive to become. Salvation is obtained by removing one's karmic debt through devotion to Krishna and right actions through reincarnation.

Transcendental Meditation is a spiritual practice or yoga founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Followers have a pantheistic view of God. Their goal is to lose their personality in the oneness of God. They do not consider Jesus to be the unique Son of God or God manifest in the flesh. For them, salvation is achieved by realizing one is in union with the Creative Intelligence. The answer to every problem is that there is no problem. One is not a sinner, just forgetful of his oneness with the divine.

Thus, Hinduism is not compatible with Christianity. They deny the biblical Trinity, deity of Christ, and the doctrines of atonement, sin, and salvation. According to the author, Hinduism absorbs all religions while Christianity excludes them.



# The New Age Cult

## The New Age Cult Summary and Analysis

New Age refers to the Aquarian Age or a new era of enlightenment, peace, prosperity, love, and satisfaction. Followers of the New Age believe man is inherently divine and all things are divine. All is one and all is God. Man is told to look inward and recognize he is a god. However, Christians believe Romans 3:23 which says there is none righteous.

According to followers of the New Age, God is an impersonal consciousness and power. Man is separated from God only in his own consciousness. They advocate methods of altering consciousness through yoga, meditation, chanting, drugs, and other means. In their eyes, there is no absolute truth because all beliefs are valid. Truth is perceived individually, a concept known as moral relativism.

Jesus was an enlightened teacher, but they do not believe He is the one and only Son of God. Christians look to the verse in Isaiah 44:6 in which Jesus said, "Besides me there is no God." To the New Ager, salvation is accomplished through good works and reincarnation. They eliminate heaven and substitute it with the Buddhist idea of Nirvana, in which all human souls will eventually be absorbed into the great world soul.

Almost 60 million people participate in some New Age practice or occultist thinking. According to the author, the media has praised the New Age movement. In the 1960's, the movement began to grow bold and by the 1980's it was in full force.

The New Age movement has ancient roots in the occult. The occult means "hidden" or "secret" things. They practice: astrology, numerology, witchcraft, crystal gazing, necromancy (communicating with the dead), magic, palm reading, fortune telling, and using tarot cards, Ouija boards, and mediums. To the Christian, these are all activities forbidden to man and cursed by God.

The author gives advice to Christians on how to confront New Agers. The author tells Christians to pray, communicate your love, seek common ground, define your terminology in an inoffensive way, ask questions, read the Word to them, avoid criticism, commend them on some efforts, study the New Age, reveal the weakness of moral relativism, discuss absolute truth, show inconsistencies in the New Age worldview, refer them to good resources, and be on guard against New Age thinking.



# Islam—The Message of Muhhamad

## Islam—The Message of Muhhamad Summary and Analysis

Islam is the Arabic term for submission. Muslim is the name given to the follower of Islam. To followers of Islam, the sovereignty of Allah is of utmost importance. Allah is the Arabic term for God. He is their one true God. Muslims do not focus on a personal relationship with Allah while Christians have personal relationships with their God. For Muslims, Allah has no likeness and he is unknowable.

Muhammad is the chief prophet of Allah. Muhammad was an Arab born in the city of Mecca in A.D. 570 and he died A.D. 632. He claimed his purpose was to restore true religion and praise to Allah. Muhammad had twelve wives and two concubines in his lifetime. He was supposedly attacked by two angels who cut his belly open and cleansed his heart. In A.D. 610, he claimed to have received his first of a series of revelations of the Qur'an from Allah through the angel Gabriel.

The Qur'an is the perfect will of Allah. Qur'an is Arabic for "the recitation," a collection of revelations from Allah given to Muhammad. Wherever the Bible and the Qur'an contradict, the Muslim believes the Bible to be incorrect. Abrogation is allowed in the Qur'an, where a former law is annulled and a better one put in its place. The author points out that their God apparently can change His mind.

Though the Qur'an teaches all of mankind has sinned, there is no original sin. Humans are not predisposed toward sin, but they do commit sins. Salvation is by the will of God through human obedience to God's law.

Jesus is regarded as a spiritual guide, but Muhammad is revered more than Jesus. Jesus, to the Muslim, was not the Son of God, not part of the Trinity, did not die on the cross, did not rise again, and did not atone for anyone's sins. Interestingly enough, Muslims do believe Jesus was sinless.

Next to Christianity, Islam is the second largest religion in the world. As a world religion, it is not technically a cult. However, the author thought it important to include it in this book. In addition to being a religious force, they have influence socially and politically. Over 1,800,000,000 claim Allah as their God and Muhammad as their prophet. The nation of Islam has over 100,000 members in the United States alone. Attention has been given to this religion from Rev. Louis Farrakhan, Khallid Abdul Muhammad, and Spike Lee in his movie Malcolm X. There are a growing number of black Muslims.

There are several schools of Islam. The Sunnite has the greatest number of followers and they accept the leadership of only the first four leaders of Islam in direct succession from Muhammad. The Shi'ites follow Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet. Ninety-five percent of Shi'ites live in Iran. The Ishmailites believe Ismail was the final Imam, or

spiritual head. The Ahmadiyahs were founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who claimed to be the Messiah and image of Muhammad. The Sufis are a mystical branch of Islam.

The Muslims have five pillars of their faith. First, they must recite the Shahada (there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah). Second, they are to give five daily prescribed prayers in direction of the holy city of Mecca. Third, it is important for Muslims to give alms. Fourth, fasting is required during the entire month of Ramadan from sunrise to sunset. Lastly, at some point in the life of each Muslim, they must make a pilgrimage to Mecca. The Jihad has been referred to by some as the sixth pillar. This can mean an individual's efforts to be righteous, but can also refer to actual military struggle or holy war.

The author recommends Christians share the gospel with a Muslim by discussing the nature of God, the identity and deity of Jesus Christ, and salvation by grace alone apart from works.

# The Cults on the World Mission Field

## The Cults on the World Mission Field Summary and Analysis

Cults do not usually identify themselves by their popular names. In fact, the literature of many cult systems is unmarked. Public meetings are rarely identified with the official name of the sponsoring group. The author implies cults do this to prevent any potential follower from coming in with preconceived notions of the cult.

All major cult systems use the Bible. Most cultists use terminology of historical Christianity. Missionaries of cults deny the doctrines of the Trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, and salvation by grace alone.

Young people tend to be the target for converts. Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are found in almost every major mission area in the world. They reach out to people in their own language. Many go door-to-door ready to discuss with anyone the beliefs of their cult.



# Jesus of the Cults

## Jesus of the Cults Summary and Analysis

The author encourages Christians to understand how those outside their faith view Jesus. Moreover, Christians should remember the message of the cross is going to be offensive and controversial to others yet they should defend their faith and evangelize because Christ commanded it.

The person and work of Jesus Christ is the very foundation of the Christian faith. To the Christian Scientist, Jesus is a divine ideal or principle inherent within every man yet Jesus did not come in the flesh. To the Jehovah's Witness, Jesus is "a god" but not the Almighty God who is Jehovah. Further, they believe Jesus had been Michael the archangel before appearing in the world as a perfect man. For the Mormon, Jesus is a god among many gods and a spirit-brother of Lucifer.

The author states that criticizing another's religious beliefs does not necessarily mean personal antagonism toward those with different beliefs. Unfortunately, some cult members may interpret Christians as hostile on a personal level.

Christians are reminded in Matthew 7:15 to beware of false prophets. The author recommends Christians come well prepared when defending their faith since Christ commanded the church to be ready and to do it out of respect and love for the Lord.



# Cult Evangelism—Mission Field on Your Doorstep

## Cult Evangelism—Mission Field on Your Doorstep Summary and Analysis

The author reminds Christians that cultists are precious souls for whom Jesus died on the cross. Cult members are human beings with homes, families, and friends. It is important Christians show the real source of antagonism with the cultist to be theology and not a difference of personalities. Christians should find a common ground of understanding, such as the authority of the Scriptures or the attributes of God. They can then use the Word of God and prayer. The author labels prayer as "the most powerful motivating force in the universe."

Christians, according to the author, must take responsibility for neglecting their responsibility for personal evangelism. Christians have not studied the Word enough. The average Christian may know what he or she believes, but may not know why it is believed.

Cults should be regarded as mission fields. The average cultist has a good working knowledge of the Bible. Most rely on rituals, good works, right living, or self-sacrifice as a way to please God. However, Christians look to the Bible, which talks about the folly of self-righteousness. The cardinal doctrines, especially those concerning the person, nature, and work of Jesus Christ, should be discussed.

The author urges Christians to define their terms very clearly. The author adds that cults thrive upon ignorance and confusion where Scripture is concerned. Cultism can only be overcome with sound theology.

The Internet has given increased exposure to cults. However, the author points out that the same advances can be used by Christians to proclaim the truth.

The author ends by insisting on three vital keys to witnessing to cult members. First, Christians must be educated in basic doctrines. Second, Christians should be trained to share their faith simply, clearly, and persuasively. Third, Christians must demonstrate the love of Christ.



# The Road to Recovery

## The Road to Recovery Summary and Analysis

The author argues there are five key projects that need to be worked on in order to reach cultists. First, there must be research into the background and theology of major cult systems. Christians need to know where cults are growing and developing geographically. Questionnaires could be sent to Christian leaders about the challenge of cults. This project involves collecting, sorting, and condensing usable facts and information.

Second, a computer retrieval system could be developed to provide answers on the cults. It could be set up so anyone can type in a question and receive a quick reply with documentation.

Third, specialized literature needs to be translated, published, and distributed throughout the world. This includes tracts, pamphlets, and books.

Fourth, education must be reevaluated at seminaries, Bible institutes, colleges, and universities. Cult Apologetics courses should be required, not just offered. Christians should be taught not just what they believe, but why they believe it.

Fifth, there should be conferences on cults for Christians to attend. These conferences or lectures could take place at the local church level and have time for questions and answers.



# The Worldwide Church of God—From Cult to Christianity

## The Worldwide Church of God—From Cult to Christianity Summary and Analysis

Armstrongism teaches the Bible is God's Word and is best interpreted by Herbert W. Armstrong, "God's Apostle." Herbert Armstrong was born on July 31, 1892 in Des Moines, Iowa. He claimed to be a descendant of King David on his mother's side. He was raised by Christian parents. His cult believed he was God's sole channel of divine truth. He claimed he was the "Elijah" type who precedes the return of Jesus Christ. Armstrong said his organization truly represented Christianity and all others were false.

Armstrong said Jesus and the Father are two gods of the "God Family." Armstrong believed in the deity of Jesus, yet he taught Jesus was not the Son of God before His birth through Mary. He believed the resurrection of Jesus was spiritual and not physical. Armstrong said the Holy Spirit, while not God, impregnates the believer as a down payment for salvation. Salvation, for the follower of Armstrongism, is a result of good works and the sacrifice of Christ.

Armstrong believed mankind becomes a God being and part of the God Family once salvation is achieved. He said, "God's purpose is to make us immortal like God, until we become God as he is God." Apparently, Armstrong claimed God would reproduce himself into what could become billions of God persons in the God Family. Armstrong declared salvation to be a process with Christ dying on the cross as the beginning of the plan of salvation.

Armstrong made many false predictions in his time. In 1934, he predicted the end of the Times of the Gentiles. In 1938, the Catholic Church was supposed to come to her final end. In 1939, the world war was predicted to continue through to the great tribulation. In 1941, Armstrong labeled Hitler the beast of Revelation. In 1943, Hitler was predicted to fight against Christ. In 1956, Armstrong said millions of Christians would be martyred before 1975. In 1957, one third of the population was said to die of disease and famine over the next fifteen years. In 1962, Armstrong claimed God would set up his kingdom and no human being would be alive in twenty years. In 1967, the Day of Eternal was falsely predicted to come by 1977. Obviously, none of Armstrong's predictions came true.

Armstrongism went through a remarkable change by successor Joseph W. Tkach, who lived from 1927 to 1995. He reversed Armstrong's doctrines with full acceptance of the Trinity, Christ's divinity and humanity, the person and deity of the Holy Spirit, the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and salvation by grace through faith alone. Currently, there are ninety factions of Armstrong's teaching. Most splinter groups retain the name "Church of God" somewhere in their title. The Worldwide Church of God is an organization of 300

pastors who are committed to preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church now holds membership in the National Association of Evangelicals. They have abandoned the unbiblical doctrines of Herbert W. Armstrong.



# The Puzzle of Seventh Day Adventism

## The Puzzle of Seventh Day Adventism Summary and Analysis

Seventh Day Adventists (SDAs) believe their founder, Ellen G. White, was anointed with the gift of prophecy to interpret Scripture. White was accused by some of plagiarizing and misusing her prophetic gift yet she was never called a false prophet since she was true to the main doctrines of the Christian faith. SDAs acknowledge not everything she said was inspired by God or infallible. They believe the Bible is inerrant and superior to White's writings. For them, the Bible is the final authority on all matters of their faith.

The Great Second Advent Awakening swept through the United States in the 1840's and was led by William Miller. Miller was born in 1782 in Massachusetts and was a deeply religious Christian. He taught that around 1843 Jesus Christ would come again. The author reminds the reader that Acts 1:7 says, "It is not for you to know the time or the seasons." A large number of biblical scholars also endorsed the date and were publicly humiliated for their wrong calculations. Though Miller himself was not a SDA, his ministry sparked others, including Ellen G. White, to form the SDAs.

The Seventh Day Adventist name was officially assumed in 1860 at a conference in Battle Creek, Michigan. This became the headquarters until 1905 when it was moved to Takoma Park, Maryland. Currently, it is headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland. There are twelve million members worldwide in 200 countries and it is growing rapidly in third world countries. It is the eighth largest international religious body in the world and it has one of the biggest Protestant education systems in the world.

According to the author, there has been quite a bit of misinformation about Adventist history and theology. Followers have remained outside the mainstream of Christian fellowship. It was not until 1957 that the General Conference of SDA published the first definitive and comprehensive explanation of the faith.

For over a century, Adventism has had a stigma of being labeled as a non-Christian cult system. The author believes it is completely possible to be a Seventh-Day Adventist and be a true follower of Jesus Christ.

SDAs adhere to the foundational doctrines of Christian theology. They believe all Scripture is inspired by God, God's Word is final authority on what is truth, Jesus is God and existed with the Father from all eternity, He became incarnate through the miraculous conception and Virgin Birth, he lived a sinless life as fully man and fully divine, He made an all-sufficient atoning sacrifice on the cross, Jesus rose literally and physically from the grave into heaven, Jesus is returning a second time, salvation comes through Christ by grace through faith in His blood, and we cannot earn salvation.



For the SDA, the doctrine of hell and eternal torment for the wicked is replaced with the concept of soul-sleep. Soul-sleep means man rests in the tomb until Jesus returns. They claim death is a state of unconsciousness. There is a heaven for true believers. The author cites several passages of Scripture (such as II Corinthians 5:8 which says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord) to counter the argument of soul sleep, yet does not see this as affecting the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith or the salvation of the soul.

SDAs believe an undetermined period of punishment will happen before the ultimate destruction of the wicked with Satan. SDAs reject the doctrine of eternal torment. They regard life as a gift of God not entitled to the wicked. Moreover, they view torment as the perpetuation and immortalization of sin and suffering.

SDAs attend worship on Saturdays because of their belief that the Sabbath is the Lord's Day. The author thinks it is fine for them to worship on Saturday, but reminds SDAs not to pass judgment on those who worship on Sunday. In Romans 14, the Bible says not to judge the observance of days.

Another difference between SDAs and other denominations of Christianity is that SDAs believe acceptance of Christ at conversion does not mean that a person's eternal destiny is sealed. Rather, they believe the life record after conversion helps determine it.

Even though they emphasize the necessity of grace for salvation, SDAs concentrate upon the law of God. While they disagree with legalism—the doctrine that keeping the law merits salvation—they believe the law must be kept as a sign of obedience to God. While SDAs support the belief that law keeping cannot earn salvation, they do however teach that by breaking the law one forfeits salvation.

SDAs state emphatically they believe Jesus Christ is their sole propitiation for sin and Satan has no part as a scapegoat. Apparently, at one time it was thought SDAs believed Satan was their scapegoat. SDAs have said that even if Satan could die a thousand times, they know it would not make up for our sin.

Thus, the author highlights the major differences between SDAs and mainstream Christians, however, he does believe SDAs are Christians with a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.



# Swedenborgianism

## Swedenborgianism Summary and Analysis

Emanuel Swedenborg, who was born in Sweden and lived from 1688 to 1772, founded the Church of New Jerusalem. He was an inventive genius with great acceptance and prominence who may have practiced clairvoyance. In 1743, he apparently received spiritual illumination with tremblings, voices, and lights. In 1745, he told people he received a divine summons. The Church of New Jerusalem was organized in London in 1788. In 1789, they held their first general conference. The church was organized in Baltimore, Maryland in 1792. Today it is known as the Swedenborgian Church and it has fifty thousand worldwide members, with two thousand living in the United States. The church operates Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio.

Swedenborgians believe God is not three distinct persons, but three "essentials" of one God. Thus, they do not believe in the Trinity. They do not believe the Holy Spirit is a distinct person nor do they believe Christ's body was raised in flesh and bones. They view some Scripture interpreted by Emmanuel Swedenborg to be the Word of God. Swedenborg claimed only the books of the Bible with "internal sense" were God's Word.

For Swedenborgians, salvation is a continual process of overcoming evil and serving God. The devil does not exist. Man chooses heaven or hell based on his earthly relationships. In heaven, man becomes an angel; while in hell, man becomes an evil spirit. They believe the final judgment is not evaluation by a Supreme Being, but it is facing the truth about your real self.



# Rosicrucianism

## Rosicrucianism Summary and Analysis

Christianus Rosenkreutz, who lived from 1378 to 1484, founded Rosicrucianism. He was a German scholar who focused on the occult. However, he used Christian vocabulary in his teachings. He stood vehemently against Roman Catholicism. The headquarters for this 250,000-member cult is in San Jose, California. The cult is found primarily in the Southwest and Western parts of the United States and is growing on the Eastern seaboard and in the Midwest. They deny being a religion or a church. Rather, they call themselves "a brotherhood attempting to help mankind master its destiny."

God is an impersonal being composed of seven spirits that manifest themselves as a triune godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is all, meaning all of reality is a part of or an expression of the essence or nature of God (a Pantheistic worldview). On the highest level, a "universal spirit" presides over the spirits. In their view, Jesus Christ was not the Son of God. He was a spirit belonging to human evolution. There is no vicarious atonement. Resurrection is replaced with reincarnation. Man is supposedly evolving into a divine being. According to the author, Rosicrucianism attempts to synthesize the basic truths of all religions and form them into a master system.



# Characters

## God

God is worshipped by followers of many religions. Christians believe God exists as One God in a Holy Trinity with God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit being three distinct persons. Many cult members have a hard time understanding how the Christian has one God, made up of three persons. Christians need to be able to communicate to others their concept of God. The Christian God is all-knowing (omniscient), all-powerful (omnipotent), and all-good (omnibenevolent). God has always existed and will always exist. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Bible tells us there is nothing man can do to separate anyone from the love of God. It is because of this love that God the Father, sent His Son Jesus Christ to live a sinless life on earth as a man, yet fully divine. Jesus is God the Son who died on the cross and offers forgiveness of sin to all who believe in Him. God the Holy Spirit enters the heart of the believer upon salvation. It is God the Holy Spirit who speaks to the hearts of Christians and equips them to do work for the kingdom of God.

## Jesus

Christians believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and part of the Holy Trinity. Jesus is also referred to in the Bible as the Word of God. He performed many miracles in his thirty-three years of life on the earth. Christians believe salvation comes through faith that Jesus, born of a Virgin, fully man, and fully God, lived a perfect life and died on the cross for their sins. Christians believe he rose again on the third day in physical flesh and bones and is alive today in heaven with God the Father and someday He will return. Salvation comes by grace through faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and that on the cross He atoned for the sins of all who believe in Him. It is through this faith the Christian receives forgiveness for the sins and the gift of eternal life in heaven. The author urges readers to understand what each cult believes about Jesus, since He is the foundation of the Christian faith. People of other faiths tend to believe Jesus was just a "good man" or "one of many gods." Islam places their prophet Muhammad above Jesus. Christians can share what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, their Savior and Lord.

## Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is part of the Christian Trinity. He enters the hearts of believers and enables them to live lives pleasing to God. The Bible reminds us believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells within each Christian. The Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Holy Spirit's personality and deity. According to the author, the





Spiritists are members of a cult that relies on the power of demonic forces, not the Holy Spirit.

## **Helena Blavatsky**

She was born in 1875 in New York City. She presided over the Theosophists during her lifetime and beyond through her writings. Her literary work, *The Secret Doctrine*, is still regarded as divinely inspired by loyal Theosophists.

## **Buddha**

Gautama Buddha, or Siddharta Gautama, founded the Buddhist religion. His followers believe he found "enlightenment" and the "true path" through his four noble truths and the eightfold path.

## **Mary Baker Eddy**

She was born in New Hampshire in 1821 and she was the founder of Christian Science. She required her followers to circulate and sell as many of her books as possible and, as a result, grew very wealthy.

## **Mirza Husayn Ali**

He is the founder of the Bahai faith and called "Baha'u'llah." He claimed he played Christ to his predecessor, Mirza Ali Muhammad (known as "Bab"), who supposedly played the part of John the Baptist. Mirza Husayn Ali left behind 200 books and tablets for his followers.

## **Herbert W. Armstrong**

He is the founder of Armstrongism. He was born on July 31, 1892 in Des Moines Iowa and claimed to be a descendant of King David on his mother's side. He was raised by Christian parents. He believed he was God's sole channel of divine truth and the "Elijah" type who was coming before the return of Jesus Christ.

## **L. Ron Hubbard**

Hubbard was born on March 13, 1911 in Tilden, Nebraska. His first book on Scientology was published in 1951. He began his Church of Scientology in California in 1954.



## Allah

Allah is the one god worshipped in Islam. The term "Allah" is the Arabic term for God.

## Krishna

The Hare Krishnas are an Eastern religion that believe Krishna is the supreme personality of the godhead.

## Mohammed

Islamists regard him as the chief prophet of Allah, their one true God. He was an Arab born in the city of Mecca in A.D. 570 and who died in A.D. 632. The Qur'an is believed to be a collection of revelations from Allah given to Muhammed.

## Rev. Sun Myung Moon

Born in Korea to Confucian parents, Moon founded the Unification Church. He reportedly received a vision of Jesus Christ on April 17, 1936 and he testified he had met Jesus, Moses, and Buddha. Three million people worldwide follow his teachings.

## Lenora Piper

In 1885, she began a forty-year career as a spiritistic medium. She proved her ability to know answers to things she had no way of knowing. She helped Spiritism gain a bigger following.

## Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

He founded the Eastern religion of Rajneeshism. He formed a multimillion dollar corporation, Rajneesh Foundation International, to sell his books, diaries, and videos. He promoted nudity and free sex and incorporated popular therapies and techniques. By 1984, Rajneesh had 359,000 followers.

## Christianus Rosenkreutz

Born in 1378, this German scholar founded Rosicrucianism. He emphasized the occult yet also used Christian terminology in his teachings. His primary belief was that God was composed of seven spirits.



## **Charles Taz Russell**

Russell was born in 1852 and spent his early years in Pennsylvania. In 1879, he started The Herald of the Morning and later went on to publish The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom and named his group "Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society," which later became known as the Jehovah's Witnesses.

## **Satan**

Some cults deny his existence, but Christians believe Satan was once an angel who fell because of his desire to be God. Satan is the author of everything evil and has his own followers.

## **Joseph Smith, Jr.**

Smith was born in Vermont in 1805 and he started the Mormon religion after receiving a vision he had been chosen to restore true Christianity. He claimed to receive messages from the angel of Moroni which later became the Book of Mormon.

## **Faustus Socinus**

Socinus, born in 1539, was an Italian who migrated to Poland. He developed an anti-Trinitarian party which was the start of Unitarianism.

## **Emanuel Swedenborg**

An inventive genius, Swedenborg was born in Sweden in 1688. In 1745 he received a divine summons and later started the Church of New Jerusalem in 1788 in London. Today his church is known as Swedenborgian Church and has fifty thousand worldwide members.

## **Ellen G. White**

She founded the Seventh Days Adventists. They regard her writing as not infallible and the Bible is their final authority on all matters of faith.

## **Maharishi Mahesh Yogic**

He founded the spiritual practice of Transcendental Meditation, or yoga.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Brooklyn, New York appears in non-fiction**

Headquarters for Jehovah's Witnesses.

### **Boston, Massachusetts appears in non-fiction**

Headquarters for Christian Science.

### **Salt Lake City, Utah appears in non-fiction**

Headquarters for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons).

### **Wheaton, Illinois appears in non-fiction**

American headquarters for Theosophical Society.

### **Wilmette, Illinois appears in non-fiction**

Baha'i temple with nine sides, nine pillars, nine avenues, nine gates, and nine fountains emphasizing the unity of all the great religions of the world.

### **Boston, Massachusetts appears in non-fiction**

The location of the Unitarian Universalist 2,000-member Church of the Large Fellowship.

### **Clearwater, Florida appears in non-fiction**

World headquarters for Scientology.

### **Big Muddy Ranch in New Jersey appears in non-fiction**

Place of worship for Rajneeshism.

### **Mecca appears in non-fiction**

Birthplace of Muhammed, the prophet of Allah.



## **Silver Spring, Maryland appears in non-fiction**

Headquarters for Seventh-Day Adventists.

## **Baltimore, Maryland appears in non-fiction**

Swedenborgian Church organized here.

## **San Jose, California appears in non-fiction**

Headquarters for Rosicrucianism.

## **Bible appears in non-fiction**

Word of God for Christians and used by other religions and cults as well.

## **Watchtower Tracts appears in non-fiction**

Publications of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

## **Christian Science Monitor appears in non-fiction**

Magazine for Christian Scientists.

## **Book of Mormon appears in non-fiction**

Written by Joseph Smith, Jr. as supposedly told to him by the angel of Moroni.

## **The Secret Doctrine appears in non-fiction**

Written by Helena Blavatsky and followed by Theosophists.

## **Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path appears in non-fiction**

Sacred doctrine of Buddhists.



## **Dianetics appears in non-fiction**

Book written by L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology.

## **Bhagavad-Gita appears in non-fiction**

Most sacred Scripture for Hare Krishnas.

## **Qur'an appears in non-fiction**

A collection of revelations from Allah given to Muhamed.



# Themes

## Cults Evaluated By The Word of God

Cults should be evaluated with the Word of God as the standard of evaluation. Christians believe all Scripture is true, without error, and entirely inspired by God. The author shows how each cult distorts, contradicts, or ignores the Word of God and replaces it with unbiblical theology. For example, the author writes that many Watchtower statements "contain a mixture of truth and error." Furthermore, some cults "translate" the Bible differently or add their own doctrine. Other cults leave it up to the cult member to decide matters such as their own concept of God. The bottom line for the Christian is that all beliefs must be supported by the Word of God. Christians do not believe anyone has the liberty to add to, subtract from, or twist Scripture in a way that suits them. The Christian Bible starts with Genesis and ends in Revelation. For the Christian, the Word of God does not change.

## Jesus is the Cornerstone of Christianity

The author urges Christians to examine what each cult believes about Jesus. Christians believe in the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Christians also believe Christ is the Son of God and He was born of a virgin, He came to earth as fully man and fully divine, lived a sinless life, performed many miracles, died on the cross to atone for man's sins, and was bodily resurrected on the third day and is alive in heaven with the Father. Some cults look at Jesus as simply a good person or spiritual leader while other cults do not have a favorable view of him at all. The author shows how cults do not acknowledge Him as the Son of God, as part of the Trinity, or as the redeemer of man's sins. Since some cults do not believe man needs to be forgiven for any sin, they argue Jesus died in vain. Of the cults who regard Jesus as a good man, they usually place their own prophets above Him. Christians believe that if people do not make God their Lord and Savior, they will not have eternal life in heaven. The author advises Christians to address this foundational doctrine with cult members.

## Cult Leaders Not To Be Trusted

The author argues cult leaders lack character and integrity. Charles Taz Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, was involved in legal battles, questionable business practices, possible financial fraud, and had little education and was never ordained. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, was married three times, accused of plagiarizing several others, and known for her hypocrisy (telling others to deny sickness while she herself used doctors). Joseph Smith, Jr., founder of the Mormons, was a literal gold-digger, instituted polygamy, and mistakenly credited his Book of Mormon to one angel, only to later say it was another angel. L. Ron Hubbard, founder of Scientology, stated the best way to make a million dollars would be for him to

start his own religion and he did just that. He was also a bigamist with his first two marriages and later married a convicted criminal. Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, claimed women needed to have sex with him to become "cleansed" and be able to produce "sinless children." He also went to jail for tax evasion. The author implies that if these leaders lack integrity in these important issues, they cannot be trusted as spiritual leaders. Thus, the author successfully demonstrates people should not put their faith in these cult leaders.





# Style

## Perspective

The late author of this book, Dr. Walter Martin, was a Baptist minister who held to the inerrancy of Scripture. He was a teacher of Biblical Theology, Comparative Religion, and Apologetics. He was internationally known as the host of The Bible Answer Man, a popular syndicated radio call-in program heard in North America. The author gives several reasons for writing the book: to give attention to Christian missionary work among cults; to show flaws in the different cult systems; to help Christians be able to respond to cultists and present the Gospel; to show utmost care for the redemption of souls; to demonstrate the great history of the Christian faith; and to challenge others to live and testify for Christ. The intended audience is that of Christians, both new and mature. The desired impact is for Christians to reach cultists and help them see the truths of Christianity. This book was last revised, updated, and expanded in 2003 from its original version in 1965. Contributing editors include Ravi Zacharias, a respected Christian speaker and author, as well as Dr. Martin's daughter and son-in-law, Jill Martin Rische and Kevin Rische. Jill is an author and the couple has their own nationwide radio program featuring Dr. Martin as "The Original Bible Answer Man."

## Tone

This book is written from the Christian perspective. The author makes no apologies for sharing his viewpoint. All cults are studied in light of what Christianity believes. The author tries to convey the urgency of Christians understanding and reaching out to cults with the gospel. Christians are warned to be on guard for false teachings, to be students of the Word of God, and to be able to give a biblical response when approached by a cultist. The tone of the book is serious and information is presented in a scholarly way. The author does a thorough job of examining each cult, including its history, its founders, its major beliefs and practices, any changes in doctrine that have happened over time, and its differences with Christianity. In the book, the author often objects to cultist thinking by discussing Scripture from the Bible. While the author encourages Christians to defend their faith, he is also quick to say Christian must do so in an inoffensive, personable way. In the author's view, each cultist represents a soul who needs Christ. The goal for Christians therefore is not to condemn cult members, but to share the message of Jesus Christ with them.

## Structure

The first three chapters introduce readers to cultism and barriers Christians face in reaching cult members. Chapters four through eighteen each highlight a different cult. The author talks about the formation of each cult, the lives of the founders of the cults, the history and development of the cult, the influence of the cult on society, the core



beliefs of the cult, how the cult differs from Christianity, and methods for reaching out to each cult. Chapter nineteen shows how cults can talk about Jesus just like Christians do, but have totally different concepts of Him. The last two chapters are about evangelism to lost cult members. The book has four appendixes. The first appendix illustrates a cult that transformed itself into a Christian church. The second one discusses how a Christian group differs from mainstream Christianity and has mistakenly been viewed as a cult. The last two appendixes feature cults not originally discussed in previous editions of the book.

Some cults are discussed at considerably greater length than others. One could argue there needs to be a more even balance of content about all the cults. Furthermore, the information presented in the Appendix could be incorporated into chapters within the book itself. In addition, it would have been good to have had charts or visual illustrations of the information presented. Finally, the structure also did not allow for any interviews with cult members or testimonies of Christian experiences in witnessing to cult members.



## Quotes

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me," (p. 20).

"[Cultists like to] give the appearance of agreeing with nearly every statement the Christian makes," (p.30)

"[When a cultist is] confronted by a Christian whom he can learn to accept on a personal basis apart from differences of theological opinion, the possibility of communication improves markedly," (p.36).

"The deity of Jesus Christ is one of the cornerstones of Christianity," (p.107).

"The believer in Christ, therefore, is saved by grace alone, through faith in His blood," (p.174).

"Joseph Smith's religion is a polytheistic nightmare of garbled doctrines draped with the garment of Christian terminology," (p. 259).

"There is no demonic force that can withstand the presence and power of the Holy Spirit," (p. 278).

"[The cult] ignores completely the true nature, person, and work of the Lord Jesus Christ," (p. 296).

"Man could not atone for his own sins if he had 1,000 lifetimes," (p. 315).

"There can be no harmony of all world religions," (p. 330).

"[They believe] people are basically good, they do not need a 'savior' to deliver them from sin," (p. 349).

"[Scientology] members are free to choose their concept of God," (p. 363).

"[Christ] became the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only: but also for the sins of the whole world," (p. 387).

"One must choose between Hinduism and Christianity; the former absorbs all others and the latter excludes them," (p. 403).

"[Jesus said] Beside me there is no God," (p. 420).

"Muslims do not emphasize a personal relationship with God," (p. 444).

"The cults do not generally identify themselves by their popular names," (p. 456).



"Remember that the message of the Cross itself is offensive and controversial in nature," (p. 468).

"Remember that cultists are precious souls for whom Jesus Christ offered himself," (p. 478).

"The average Christian knows what he believes, but is unable to articulate why he believes," (p. 483).

"The Worldwide Church of God has abandoned unbiblical doctrines," (p. 509).

"The Bible is objectively the Word of God, the final authority in all matters of faith," (p. 568).



## Topics for Discussion

How does each cult view man, sin, salvation, and the afterlife?

Who were the key founders and what were the key writings of each cult?

What does the author encourage Christians to do in response to the cults?

Which cults have the biggest followings and why do you think that is so?

What is the difference between moral relativism and absolute truth?

Why do some cult leaders become quite wealthy?

How is Christianity different from the cults?

What similarities do you see among the cults?

What differences do you see among the cults?

What is the author's purpose in writing this book?