

Cults and World Religions

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Too Many Religions (Part I)

By J. Budziszewski

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Article available at: <http://www.boundless.org/2000/departments/theophilus/a0000297.html> (*Boundless Webzine*)

"Why are there so many religions and why is Christianity the right one?" This is a question I am asked by non-Christians.

Let me break your question into three. First, why couldn't many religions be true? Imagine that while traveling to Chicago, you come to a crossroads from which you could travel along a straight road in any of four directions: North, South, East or West. All four roads are labeled "This Way to Chicago," but it stands to reason that at least three of the signs must be wrong. Of course it's possible that none of the roads lead to Chicago (for example, Chicago might be to the Northwest), but at most, only one of them leads there. With religions, it's just the same. Each one says "This way to the Most Important Thing," but they give logically inconsistent instructions, so at most one of them really leads there. Of course, to say that a road doesn't go to Chicago doesn't mean that there's nothing good about it. Maybe it's scenic or historic; maybe there are Chicago tourism booths along the way; maybe, while traveling on it, you can even catch glimpses of Chicago at a distance. Just remember that none of these things will get you to Chicago.

Second, granted that at most one religion is true, then why should we believe that Christianity is the true one? There are lots of reasons. One is that Jesus is unlike any other religious teacher. He claimed not only to teach the Way, but to be the Way — to be God, Himself, in person. Someone who claims to be God is either evil, nuts or God. In the Gospels, we see that He doesn't come across as evil; he doesn't come across as nuts; and only one alternative is left. Here's another reason: Every attempt to explain away the Empty Tomb has failed. If a man makes the preposterous prediction that in fulfillment of prophecy he will rise from the grave, then does it, I think we have a good reason to take his other claims about himself seriously. You can find a good scholarly discussion of the Empty Tomb [<http://www.leaderu.com/truth/1truth22.html>].

Third, if only one religion is right, why are there so many others? I answer: Why not? There are more wrong answers than right ones to every question. What is two plus two? There is only one right answer, but there is an infinity of wrong ones. Besides, in religion we often prefer the wrong answers. If we don't want God most of all — if we want something else even more than God — then we convince ourselves that this Something Else is God, and that God isn't God after all.

Is Reaching God Like Reaching Chicago? (Part II)

By J. Budziszewski

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Article available at: <http://www.boundless.org/2000/departments/theophilus/a0000324.html> (*Boundless Webzine*)

In "Back from the Shadowlands," I wrote as follows:

Why couldn't many religions be true? Imagine that while traveling to Chicago, you come to a crossroads from which you could travel along a straight road in any of four directions: North, South, East, or West. All four roads are labeled "This Way to Chicago," but it stands to reason that at least three of the signs must be wrong. Of course it's possible that none of the roads lead to Chicago (for example, Chicago might be to the Northwest), but at most, only one of them leads there. With religions, it's just the same. Each one says "This way to the Most Important Thing," but they give logically inconsistent instructions, so at most one of them really leads there. Of course, to say that a road doesn't go to Chicago doesn't mean that there's nothing good about it. Maybe it's scenic or historic; maybe there are Chicago tourism booths along the way; maybe, while traveling on it, you can even catch glimpses of Chicago at a distance. Just remember that none of these things will get you to Chicago.

A number of readers wrote in to criticize my explanation. I agree that I could have made my point more clearly. Let's see if I can clarify it here! There were three main criticisms.

Objection #1: But there IS more than one way to get to Chicago.

Of course there is, but my point was not that spiritual roads are just like physical ones — it was that they *aren't* like physical ones. My argument was not "Just as there is only one way to get to Chicago, so there is only one way to get to God." Rather it was "Because there are many ways to get to Chicago, we easily assume that there are many ways to get to God. But you could imagine a world in which there were only one way to get to Chicago — and that's what the spiritual world is like."

Objection #2: Your roads were straight. Real roads curve.

Okay, let's speak of directions instead of roads. The spiritual course of an individual's life is often full of curves, but that's because he is *changing* directions, not because he is consistently *following* a direction. For example I may begin by following the direction "Wealth," which leads away from God, but later I may curve around to follow the direction "Christ," which leads toward Him.

Objection #3: All of the major world religions acknowledge some form of the Golden Rule, so shouldn't you have said that all of the roads point in roughly the same direction?

Although it's true that many of the same moral rules are recognized in all major world religions, that doesn't mean that they all lead to God in the end. We may know God's moral requirements, but by our own unaided efforts we fall infinitely short of them. As I see the matter, then, it's like this:

One of the greatest roads on the spiritual map is called "Be Holy, As I, the Lord, Am Holy." It really does point toward God, and there really are people of more than one religion walking on it. The problem is that the further you walk, the steeper the Road of Holiness becomes, until it ends in the Cliff of Purity — a flat, vertical rise of polished glass which no human being can scale. From here, people wander off in different directions. Some turn off onto a different path which is also marked "The Road of Holiness," but the road sign is wrong; the real name of this road is "Trust Your Own Righteousness," and it ends in an arctic wilderness where everyone freezes to death.

Yet those who wait humbly at the foot of the cliff may hear a voice from way up on top. It is the voice of God Himself, calling "I'm throwing down a rope. If only you'll trust it enough to grab and hang on no matter what, I'll pull you up." Sure enough, there it is — right in front of you — just within your reach. The rope is Jesus. There is no other. He said so Himself. Will you take hold?

About Islam

*Christian Answers Network (ChristianAnswers.Net: As accessed on February 24, 2005,
<http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/islam.html#beliefs> . Used by permission.*

ISLAM is the world's second largest religion with a following of over one billion people called Muslims. The word "Islam" actually means "submission to God." Therefore, a Muslim is one who strives to submit to God.

Where is Islam found? Islam has spread across the entire globe. Muslims can be found in North and South America as well as in Western Europe, but they are predominately found in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Their predominant homelands lie in the area commonly referred to as the "10/40 Window" (between 10 degrees latitudinal north and 40 degrees latitudinal north ranging from the eastern side of North Africa to the western side of Asia). About 60% of Muslims are Asian. The regional breakdown of Muslims in the rest of the world is Arab world, 22%; sub-Sahara African, 12%; Eastern Europe, 5%. The rest are scattered through the world.

When did Islam being, and who founded it? Islam was founded in 610 A.D. by a man named Mohammed. During Mohammed's time, polytheism reigned. His people were worshipping multiple gods. During one of Mohammed's trips as a trader, he had a vision from a being he perceived to be an angel who said, "There is only one God, and His name is Allah. Worship Him."

What is their holy book? Just as Christians have the Bible, Muslims have the Quran. They believe the Quran was dictated to Mohammed by God through the angel Gabriel. Muslims are also told in the Quran to read three other holy books: the Torah (which are the first five books of the Old Testament), the Zabur (which are the Psalms of David), and the Injeel (the gospel of Christ).

Where do they meet? Muslims around the world gather on Fridays in mosques. Mosques are buildings where men (and sometimes women, depending upon the country) pray to God. In a mosque during prayer time, all Muslims face toward Mecca, the birthplace of Islam, where Mohammed had his vision. Where men and women pray together, usually the men are in the front and women in the back.

What do Muslims believe in? "Islam has seven fundamental beliefs that every Muslim must accept as a part of his/her religion (the Emanul Mufassil, or Faith Listed in Detail). Every Muslim learns this formula as a part of his/her religious training." *

- "Belief in God" (who, in Arabic, is named "Allah")
- "Belief in the angels" (both good and bad)
- "Belief in the revealed Books of God
- Belief in God's many prophets" (including Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and other Christians and Jews are familiar with)
- "Accepting that there will be a Last Day
- Belief in the divine measurement of human affairs
- Belief in life after death"

* Yahiya Emerick, Understanding Islam (Indianapolis: Alpha Books, 2002, p. 18.)

Muslims also believe in Satan and in a Day of Judgment on which God will send people to either heaven or hell. They also believe that Ishmael (the father of the Arab world), not Isaac, received the promise from God through Abraham; this helps to explain why Arab Muslims feel that their claim to the Holy Land is a God-given right.

Is it true that Islam is a lot like Christianity? Although the two religions share some terminology and even some theology (monotheism, for instance), Islam is fundamentally different from Christianity. Islam is a works-oriented religion, while Christian faith is based on salvation by grace through faith as a result of the shed blood of Christ. In Islam, if God wants to forgive sin, He simply says, "It is forgiven." Christianity recognizes the necessity of the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sin. (Hebrews 9:22)

What do Muslims think about Jesus? All Muslims believe Jesus was born of a virgin and that he was a great prophet--yet he was only a man. They believe he was sent by God to help people obey God. Islam claims Jesus spoke as a baby, healed the sick, and raised the dead. The Quran refers to Jesus as the breath of God, the spirit of God, the life of God and the word of God. Muslims do not think Jesus died on the cross. They believe that right before he was to be killed, God took him up to heaven and someone else (probably Judas) replaced him on the cross. They trust that Jesus will return to the earth again to usher in the final judgment from God and confirm that Islam is the true and final religion for all mankind. (Yes, Muslims believe in the second coming of Christ!)

How do Muslims think they are saved? As a works-oriented religion, Islam requires that its adherents earn their way to heaven by performing the five pillars of the faith.

1. **Say the confession of faith.** A Muslim must confess, "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is the prophet of God."
2. **Pray.** Muslims are supposed to pray five times a day: shortly before sunrise, mid-morning, noon, mid-afternoon, and after sunset.
3. **Give alms.** Muslims are to give about 2.5 percent of their wealth.
4. **Fast during Ramadan.** For one lunar month, from sunrise to sunset, Muslims are not to allow anything to pass down their throat. (Theoretically, a good Muslim would even spit out his or her saliva.) Then from sunset to sunrise, they are permitted to eat as little or as much as they want. This is their way of developing discipline and relating to the poor. (Travelers, young children and pregnant or nursing mothers do not need to keep the fast.)
5. **Make a pilgrimage to Mecca.** Every Muslim who is financially able is supposed to travel to the birthplace of Islam once in his or her lifetime.

But do Muslims have any guarantee of salvation? Muslims have no guarantee of being saved. They believe that all their works will be accounted for and that on Judgment Day, if your bad works outweigh your good works, you are going to go to hell. But if your good works outweigh your bad works, you'll probably go to heaven. (Since God is all-powerful, they concede that He may do with you as He pleases, even if you have been very righteous. They

hope He won't be having a "bad day" at Judgment.) A third possibility is that you could go to hell and burn your sins off for a while and then be allowed into heaven. The only way Muslims can be guaranteed to go to heaven is through "jihad." Although it is often translated "holy war," "jihad" literally means "exerting force for God." One could be in "jihad" by writing a book about Islam, or by sharing his faith to bring others to Islam, or by physically fighting for the cause of Islam. If a Muslim dies in "jihad," he is guaranteed to go to heaven.

Is Islam growing? Yes, Islam is growing at an annual rate of about 3 percent. In 1900 Muslims comprised about 12.4 percent of the world's population. As of the year 2001, followers of Islam number about 22% of the world's population [adherents.com]. This growth is largely due to biological expansion; Muslims usually have large families.

Does Islam vary? Yes, Islam varies greatly around the world. Although Muslims take pains to describe themselves as members of the brotherhood of "one religion," the Islam practiced in Indonesia is very different than the Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia, which is different from that in Kazakhstan, or Iran, or Morocco.

What is the difference between Shi'ite and Sunni Islam? The difference between these two major sects is that they disagree about the legitimate successors of Mohammed. About 85 percent of all Muslims are Sunni and only 10 percent of the Muslim world is Shi'ite. (The remaining 5 percent are affiliated with other, minor sects.)

Are all Muslims radicals? No. Although Shi'ites tend to be more radical, the average Muslim is like the average Christian. They know enough to call themselves Muslims, but basically they are materialistic, want a good job, and hope to live a good comfortable life.

Do Muslims understand what Christianity is all about? The average Muslim around the world has a tremendous misunderstanding of Christianity. This is largely due to fact that their only understanding of Christianity comes from movies, music and television shows such as "Baywatch," "Madonna," Rated-R films, etc. Because they believe America is a Christian nation, they assume everything that comes out of America is Christian.

How do they view Christianity? Muslims think Christians believe in three gods: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Mother (Mary). They believe that Christians and Jews have changed the Bible; therefore, although the Quran acknowledges the Gospel of Christ, the Torah of Moses and the Psalms of David, the existing copies can't be trusted. In any case, they are all superseded by the Quran. Because of pornography from the West and the Western media, they equate Christianity with free sex, drugs, alcohol, rape, divorce ... all the evils of the West. This misconception confirms their belief that Islam is the true and final religion for all mankind.

Is much being done to bring Muslims to the one true God through Christ? Although in recent years there has been a tremendous increase in the number of Christians working among Muslims, much has yet to be done. In North Africa, there is still roughly one missionary for every two million Muslims. In northern India, it is roughly one missionary for every five million Muslims. Globally, it averages out to be one missionary for every one million Muslims.

Why is it so hard to help Muslims come to know Christ? The factors that hold a Muslim to his religion are usually only about 10 percent theological and 90 percent cultural. Muslims have to fit into a larger group of people in order to feel secure and "belong." This could be an extended family, a network of friends, etc. In this "community" (the Muslim term for this is, "umma") there is tremendous security and safety. If they ever lose their job, no problem! Their "community" will help them out until a new job is found. When Muslims are confronted with the claims of Christ, they may know it to be truth, but they are more worried about leaving their "community" than they are about not having the truth. Muslims need to first find a "community" of Christians that they can belong to before they will leave their "community" of Muslims. And in most Muslim areas, there are no acceptable Christian "communities," which makes it very difficult for Muslims to follow Christ.

Are Muslims coming to know Christ (Isa al Masih)? Absolutely Yes! More Muslims have come to faith in Christ since 1970 than in the entire previous history of outreach to the Muslim world. God is doing a new work among Muslims as He writes a new chapter in the history of His church. One factor that is fostering the growth of the church within Muslim communities is the fact that some Muslims worship Jesus in ways that they are culturally comfortable with rather than adopting Western styles and forms of worship. For instance, there is nothing wrong

(inherently evil) with the setup of a mosque, prayer five times a day, postures used during prayers, clothing, washing before prayers, etc. A follower of Christ in such cultures may be indistinguishable to Western eyes. Yet we must praise God for the unique expressions and praise He gratefully receives from cultures that very greatly. (For a good example of this, read Jim Mellis' Abu Sharif: The Mystery of the Hundredth Name.)

Author of this portion: Phil Roberts, Director of Interfaith Evangelism. Copyright © 1996 North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist

Sharing the Gospel With Muslims

Extract taken from "The Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam" by Patrick Sookhdeo ISBN 1 85792 6994 published by Christian Focus Publications. Used by permission.

Islam – which now claims a billion adherents – is without doubt the greatest single challenge facing the church today. Having emerged from the shame of western colonization, and funded with oil wealth from the Middle East, Muslims have become a confident people, eager to make converts, whether by force, persuasion, or material inducements. Where they are present as minorities in the West, Muslims are vocal in asserting their rights and assiduous in working for freedoms and privileges which are not granted to non-Muslims in Muslim-majority contexts. Despite divisions within Islam, Muslims have a basic unity and loyalty to each other which takes priority over all other loyalties. Excellent international networking and use of the most advanced communications technology reinforces the theology behind this. For Christians who would preach the gospel to Muslims, nothing less than the power of God released by the Holy Spirit is adequate.

Most Muslims who come to Christ are not won over by intellectual arguments which disprove the validity of Islam. Rather they have a personal encounter with Christ. Often this happens by reading the New Testament. Others have testified to the power of the love of Christ working through their Christian friends. Sometimes the Lord will call a Muslim to Himself through dreams and visions.

However, a knowledge of Islam can equip Christians to counter some of the most frequent objections raised by Muslims. These have been covered in the preceding sections [of the book], and include the belief that Christians worship three gods, that 'Son of God' is a physical description, and that the Christians have corrupted their Scriptures. A knowledge of Islam can also oil the wheels of the conversation and encourage a Muslim to investigate Christianity just as his or her Christian friend has clearly spent time learning about Islam.

The Christian seeking to witness to Muslims should have a thorough knowledge of the Bible, as well as of Islam. Personal testimony is always powerful.

For the Muslim, Muhammad is the last and greatest of the prophets. No useful purpose is served by unnecessary criticism of him. Nothing more readily provokes a fanatical outburst than an attack on his character. Muslims usually add respectful honorifics when they mention the name 'Muhammad.' While a Christian cannot with integrity use these, the phrase 'your prophet Muhammad' may be a helpful one, polite but without conceding any belief in the validity of Muhammad's prophet hood. Another possibility would be 'the founder of Islam' (*bani-e-Islam*), a phrase often used by Muslims. When challenged as to the life and work of Muhammad and the authority and inspiration of the Quran, it may be wiser to attempt to bring the questioner to consider Christ rather than to counter the Muslims' claims about Muhammad, and to point to the Bible rather than to become involved in argument about the nature of the Quran.

It is important to bear in mind that Muslims are individuals. Your Muslim friend may be a nominal Muslim who does little more than keep Ramadan in a half-hearted way and lives in fear of going to hell. He or she may know less about orthodox Islam than you do. Women in particular are often very ill taught in their faith, and follow a folk Islam of superstition and occultic activities that has little to do with real Islam. Your Muslim friend may be very westernized, liberal, and open to change. Equally, he or she may be an extremist who would like to see the establishment of an Islamic state ruled by Shariah. London (like certain other European capitals) is home to many Islamic extremists who have been exiled from their own Muslim countries for terrorism. Your Muslim friend may be cultivating a friendship with you in order to try to convert you to Islam. Mission (*dawa*) is just as much an obligation for the Muslim believer as for the Christian believer and they use all the same methods.

If you are a white Christian and you are seeking to witness to non-white Muslims, you have a disadvantage in that many Muslims think that all white people are Christians and judge Christianity on the basis of the godless immorality so sadly evident in western society. The Christian believer must make it clear that true Christians are just as shocked by this as Muslims. In order to help prove this, the Christian must be very careful about certain aspects of culture. Clothes should be modest and not close-fitting, especially for women. The Christian should only seek to talk to those of the same sex. Any conversation with the opposite sex should be at the Muslim's initiative. Never touch anyone of the opposite sex, even to shake hands, unless the other person initiates it. Try also to avoid eye contact with the opposite sex, even if a conversation develops. Treat both the Bible and the Quran with great respect, not placing them on the floor and not writing in them.

On the other hand, being white can open doors. A friendship with a white person can open doors. A friendship with a white person is a complete novelty to some Muslims, especially older women confined to the home, and this may act in your favor. You may be able to help in practical ways with filling in forms etc. and show love to your Muslim friend like this. Also, younger Muslims in the West, who live in western culture during school or work hours and Muslim culture at home, may really appreciate the friendship of someone who understands both the cultures and can imagine the conflicts, frustrations and stresses that result.

Care of Converts

Extract taken from "The Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam" by Patrick Sookhdeo ISBN 1 85792 6994 published by Christian Focus Publications. Used by permission.

Care of converts, new and old, is vital, for the pressure on them is great. Converts generally face rejection by their outraged family. There may be, for example, threats of violence or threats to withdraw financial support for a student. The convert is often expelled from the family home. A married convert will probably lose access to his or her children. There may be emotional blackmail; for example, the distraught mother says she will kill herself if her beloved child does not return to Islam. Sometimes this rejection is delayed until the convert is baptized.

The Church must become the convert's new family, and this means more than having a cup of tea together after the Sunday service. Practical provision and accommodation may be necessary, alongside supportive friendship. This is not a short-term thing. The rejection by family is a continuing source of pain if the breach cannot be healed.

Another difficulty facing new Christians from a Muslim background is the lack of a framework of rules in their new faith. Islam is so thoroughly regulated, with rules even about which direction to lie in bed and special prayers to say when going to the lavatory, that a new convert can be left feeling in desperate need of guidance about how to live as a Christian. Discipleship training is essential, as soon as possible.

A practical difficulty for single converts is finding a marriage partner. For those brought up in a faith where marriages are arranged by parents, courting can be very difficult. In some churches, converts are also treated with suspicion, and even referred to still as 'Muslim.' It may sometimes be necessary for the church leadership to take on the role of discreetly finding a Christian marriage partner.

About Judaism

Extracted from: A Short Look At Six World Religions, by Sue Bohlin, **Probe Ministries**.

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Both Christianity and Judaism have their roots in Old Testament faith. But Christianity is really a sister, rather than a daughter, to Judaism, which is the religion developed by rabbis from 200 B.C. on. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., that spelled the end of sacrifices and the priesthood. Instead of being guided by prophets, priests and kings, the Jewish people turned to rabbis as their authorities on matters of laws and practice.

There was basically one kind of Judaism until the eighteenth century when the Age of Enlightenment swept through Europe. That's when the three major branches of Judaism arose. That one basic kind of Judaism is what is now called "Orthodox Judaism." It has a strong emphasis on tradition and strict observance of the Law of Moses.

Reform Judaism began in Germany at the time of the Enlightenment. Reform Judaism is the humanistic branch. In fact, there are many Reform Jews who don't believe in God at all. For them, Judaism is a way of life and culture with a connection to one's ancestors that is about legacy, not faith. The middle-ground branch, seeking to find moderate ground between the two extremes of the Orthodox and Reform branches, is Conservative Judaism.

If there is any religious principle that Judaism explicitly affirms and teaches, it is the unity of God. You may have heard of the *Shema*, found in Deuteronomy 6:4 "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." This one all-important principle is the reason so many Jewish people have a hard time understanding Christianity, which they see as a religion of three gods, not one God in three Persons.

The Old Testament is the Scripture of Judaism. Many Jews, though, do not consider the Old Testament to be the Word of God or inspired, although they do give it respect as a part of Jewish tradition and history. There are some lifestyle practices that set people apart as distinctively Jewish. Traditional Jews, usually Orthodox but including some from other branches, observe the Sabbath. This means abstaining from work, driving, and lighting a fire from Friday night to Saturday night. Orthodox Jews also keep kosher, which means keeping the Old Testament dietary laws. The most well known is the prohibition against mixing meat and milk at the same meal, although many people are also aware that most Jewish people do not eat pork or shellfish.

It is difficult for Jewish people to place their faith in Jesus as Messiah because it is not considered a Jewish thing to do. In fact, they see "Jewish Christian" as an oxymoron. For many, being Jewish equals "Not Christian." But there's another big reason it is so hard for Jewish people to come to faith in Christ. They don't see a need for "salvation," because there is nothing to be saved from. If there is a God, then Jewish people already have a special relationship with Him as His chosen people. Jesus is superfluous for Jews.

If you know someone who is Jewish, pray that God will cause the scales to fall from the eyes of their heart and they will see the truth: that there's nothing more Jewish or more godly than submitting in faith to one who was, and is, the very Son of God, and who proved His love for them by dying in their place on the cross.

How should I witness to a Jew?

Extracted from: Christian Answers Network (ChristianAnswers.Net: As accessed on February 24, 2005, <http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/judaism.html> . Used by permission.

Sadly, many of today's Jews profess godliness but don't embrace the Scriptures as we presume they do. Therefore, it is often difficult to reason with them about Jesus being the Messiah. This is why it is imperative to ask a Jew if he has kept the Law of Moses—to use the Law and remove the spirit of self-righteousness. The Law will show him his need of a Savior, and become a "schoolmaster" to bring him to Christ, as happened to Paul, Nicodemus, Nathaniel and the Jews on the Day of Pentecost. They had the advantage of the Law. It was the Law that brought 3,000 to the foot of the Cross on that day. It was a "schoolmaster" to bring them to Christ ([Galatians 3:24](#)). Without it they would not have known that they had sinned ([Romans 7:7](#)), and would not have therefore, seen their need of the Savior.

About Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses

Extracted from: A Short Look At Six World Religions, by Sue Bohlin, **Probe Ministries**.

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Have you ever answered your door to find a couple of nicely-dressed people asking to talk to you about spiritual things? Chances are they were either Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses. Since both groups send many missionaries not only into American homes but to foreign countries, it makes sense to cover them in a discussion of world religions.

Many people think of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses as Christians in slightly different denominations, but this is not the case. To put it bluntly, both religions teach another gospel and another Jesus. They are cults, not Christian denominations.

Mormonism was founded by Joseph Smith, a teenage boy in New York. He claimed that he was visited by first God the Father and the Son, and then by the angel Moroni, who gave him golden plates, which he translated into the Book of Mormon. He said that Christianity had been corrupted since the death of the last apostle, and God appointed him to restore the truth. But Joseph Smith provided nine different versions of these events, which set the tone for the rest of his teachings.

Deuteronomy 18:22 gives God's standards for His prophets: 100% accuracy. Joseph Smith wrote a lot of prophecies, many of which never came true. He was a false prophet, and the religion he founded is not from God. Mormonism is not Christian because it denies some of the essential doctrines of Christianity, including the deity of Christ, salvation by grace, and the bodily resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, Mormon doctrine contradicts the Christian teaching that there is only one God, and it undermines the authority and reliability of the Bible.

Jehovah's Witnesses was founded by Charles Taze Russell, another false prophet. His Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has produced a prodigious amount of literature. It has prophesied the return of Christ in 1914, 1925, and 1975. Again, by God's standards, the representatives of the Watchtower Society are false prophets. Jehovah's Witnesses deny the basics of the Christian faith. They deny the Trinity. They believe there is one singular God, Jehovah. Jesus is actually the created being Michael the Archangel, and who became flesh at the incarnation. The Holy Spirit is not God but an active force much like electricity or fire. They deny the bodily resurrection of Christ. Like Mormons, they deny the existence of hell and eternal punishment. Both of these religions teach salvation by works, not God's grace. And they teach that salvation is only found in their organizations.

What do you do if they come to your door? First, don't do anything without sending up a prayer of dependence on God. If you are not well-grounded in your own beliefs, unless you know not only what you believe but why it's true, then you should probably politely refuse to talk to them, and work on your own understanding of your faith. Both Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are very successful at drawing in church-goers who can't recognize false teaching because they don't know what's true.

If you do know the Bible and what you believe, then prayerfully and humbly answer their questions and comments by showing them what the Bible says. And pray that God's Spirit will show them the truth. He is grieved that people for whom Jesus died are so deceived.

About Hinduism

*Christian Answers Network (ChristianAnswers.Net: As accessed on February 24, 2005),
<http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/hinduism.html> Used by permission.*

The very name "Hinduism" is a regional/people group descriptive name. It is the name for the inhabitants and the religion of the Indus River region. The inhabitants were called Hindus and their religion was called Hinduism. Yet Hinduism today covers a diverse number of beliefs, with a few unifying themes...

Location.

Hindus are found mainly in the nation of India, where over 90% of Hindus live. As well, there are large populations of Hindus in Nepal, Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Suriname, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Trinidad and Tabago, and Bhutan. Estimates for the population of Hindus are between 800 million and 825 million.

History.

The history of Hinduism comes from the Aryan peoples who moved to the Indus Valley in northwestern India, somewhere around 1500 B.C. Over the next centuries they conquered the entire subcontinent of India. They brought with them an Aryan religion of what was then in Iran, somewhat similar to Zoroastrianism. Hinduism has developed

from this root. Different "ways" have developed over the history of Hinduism, Vedic Hinduism being the oldest, and then the ascetic and mystical way known as Vedantic Hinduism, and more recently the way of devotion, or Bhakti.

Holy Scriptures.

The oldest and most revered holy writings are the Vedas, consisting of four books or more correctly--collections. They are the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. These are sacrificial hymns, chants, rituals and explanations. In addition to the Vedas, numerous other writings have been added through the years. These include the Upanishads, which are multiple in number, ten being most important. The common topics are: states of consciousness, dreams, meditations, self-realization (that you are divine), and the unity of all things. Then there are the Darshanas, with six major schools or Philosophical systems and teachings developed out of the Vedas: Nyaya, Mimamsa, Vaisheshika, Yoga, Samkhya, and Vedanta.

The Puranas are mostly more recently written (500-1000 A.D.) and are popularly well-known in India today with the myths and stories of the more recent gods of India. The Tantras are a distinct branch of the devotion movement with emphasis on the power of the divine feminine or goddess. There are also two epics in Hinduism, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Ramayana gives an account of the noble king, Ram and his rescue of his wife, Sita, who was abducted. He does this with the help of Hanuman, the monkey god. The Mahabharata is the lengthy account of the war between two families, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Mahabharata includes the text of the Bhagavad Gita, perhaps the most popular of all Hindu texts.

Temples and Worship.

Places of worship are everywhere for Hindus. Shrines and temples are common in India and wherever Hindus live. The most basic place of worship for Hindus is the home shrine in which a person's individual personal gods are worshipped or the family's gods are worshipped. An individual will often keep their gods and pictures on a small shelf or alcove. The family gods will often have a designated place of the house for worship; in wealthier homes it may even be a room of the house.

Temples are larger places of worship to which individuals or families will go for giving a puja or sacrifice. A congregational form of meeting is not typical for Hindus. An individual will come and offer something for a sacrifice to the god of the temple and receive back a small portion of what they offered, called a prasad. Though the family shrine is generally kept by the eldest female of the family, temples are run by males only, and generally by a Brahmin caste member. The idols or objects of worship in these temples can be as simple as a rock or stone, a somewhat conical-shaped stone called a lingam, or a presentation or representation of one of the many thousands and thousands of Hindu gods. As well, each village or area will often have a particular place of worship identified with it, often a natural feature such as a tree, a hill, a boulder, or a pond. Worship is incorporated into everything--worship of the sun as it rises, sacred designs drawn on the ground, etc. Famous natural features are also often places of worship, such as the Ganges river which is considered sacred. Temples grow from being viewed as successful in answering peoples' requests of the god(s) of that temple. A large temple will have one central chamber with many other smaller niche-shrines. The gods worshipped in these temples are usually associated with Shiva, Vishnu, or the goddess, generically known as Devi.

Basic Beliefs:

1. Reincarnation

Man is trapped in a nearly endless series of rebirths (samsara). All creatures are in the struggle to ascend the ladder of rebirths through the lower forms of life up to human life, through the lower castes, to the highest caste of the Brahmins, finally achieving after thousands of incarnations- release (moksha) or liberation.

2. Karma

Karma is believed to be law that entraps and keeps a soul in samsara, the long process of rebirth after rebirth. There are different types or categories of karma: the karma with which one is born that has come from previous lives (sanchita), the karma of your present life's actions (kriyaman), karma produced by our thoughts--our plans for our life (agama), and the karma that is determined to be in force for this present life (prarandha). There is not simply individual karma but also the karma of your people and culture. Karma is used to explain evil in that if something terrible happens to a person with no seeming connection to their direct actions, it is assumed that the law of karma is bringing to bear the bad fruit of past actions.

3. **Dharma**

This means religion or duty. Hinduism is sometimes referred to as Sanatana Dharma (eternal law or duty). One knows one's duty in society by determining one's caste placement and stage of life. This is called varnashrama. By determining one's caste and stage of life (child or student, householder, retired, and the stage of renunciation).

4. **Caste**

The law of karma determines your placement in society, in one of four major castes: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (workers). The three higher castes are termed 'twice-born' and are given full participation in society. The Shudra caste exists to do the manual labor of the society and are considered impure to the higher castes. Outcastes or untouchables (called harijan by Gandhi, meaning 'children of God') have little or no standing in the society and do work that renders them unclean. Though the caste system is formally abolished in India, it is still conceptually essential in the Hindu concept of dharma, karma, and reincarnation.

The Hindu View of Jesus.

In contrast to some of the more recent religions, such as Islam and Baha'i, Hinduism does not refer to Jesus in its scriptures, and he plays no role in any of the classical Hindu mythology. Nevertheless, due to the contact with Christianity over the last few centuries, some Hindu thinkers have found a place for Jesus in their view. These considerations have taken the form of two particularly noteworthy ideas.

The first one is that Jesus was one of the incarnations (avatars) of God. Most Hindus believe that God, specifically Vishnu, took on human or animal forms at various times in order to perform certain feats that would preserve true Hindu teaching (the dharma). In this context, then, it has been argued that Jesus, along with Rama, Krishna, and others, was just one more divine self-embodiment. Whereas Christians generally believe that Jesus was the one and only incarnation of God, this view would hold that he was an incarnation, just not the only one.

The second way of trying to incorporate Jesus into Hinduism, not necessarily incompatible with the first, is to claim that Jesus learned the teachings which he later proclaimed in India. According to this notion, Jesus spent his so-called "silent years" between ages twelve and thirty at the feet of Hindu masters in India, and it is their teaching that he then proclaimed during his ministry. (See Did Jesus go to India as a child and learn from Hindu Gurus?) A Christian might respond to the second theory by pointing out that Christ's teaching was, of course, nothing like Hinduism, so that if he had learned it in India, he either forgot it or modified it beyond recognition on the way back to Palestine. And this problem also vitiates the idea that Christ was an incarnation of Vishnu because he certainly did not teach the Hindu dharma. And finally, since Jesus claimed to be the only way to God, if his teaching was true, he could not have been one of several ways to God. Thus, the attempts by some Hindus to incorporate Jesus tend to be forced and not very helpful.

Salvation in Hinduism.

"Salvation" is an ambiguous word that can refer to a lot of phenomena. When trying to understand the concept of salvation in any religion, we need to be very clear on what the context is. It is not just a question of how one might get saved, but also what one is saved from and to. In Hinduism, salvation is most frequently referred to as "moksha," which means most literally "release." One is saved, not from sin, as a Christian might say, but from one's own existence. The fundamental problem for all human beings is that we live in a world of suffering and illusion, and that, left to ourselves, we will continue to do so for all time. As long as we exist in the phenomenal world (maya), we will suffer, and since we are doomed to move from life to life to life in the cycle of reincarnation (samsara), the suffering will theoretically never end. What drives this seemingly unbreakable chain of existences is the law of karma; it determines as what kind of a being (plant, animal, or human) and in what circumstances we will reappear in our next life, depending on what we do in this life. So, the point of moksha is to be released from the cycle of reincarnation and to attain a state of bliss in union with God.

Hinduism has traditionally recognized three main paths of salvation.

1. The "way of works" is the attempt to purify one's soul by the meticulous observance of all the laws and obligations of the Hindu scriptures.
2. The second way, the "way of knowledge" goes into the opposite direction and counsels the total renunciation of all one's life and to seek salvation in a mystical realization of identity with God.
3. The third way is by far the most popular; it is the "way of devotion (bhakti)." According to this point of view, if one commits oneself totally to the worship of a particular god or goddess, then one's deity will do all that is necessary on one's behalf. So, for example, in this third way, if I devote myself completely to

Krishna, then Krishna will take care of my karma problems and usher me into fellowship with him when I die.

So, in Hinduism one is saved from karma and reincarnation by following one of the three ways. Finally, the result will be a state of bliss in union with God (sometimes conceived of as identity with God). Heaven, as Christians think of it, would not be the goal since one would still be sent from heaven back to further physical lives.

Factions in Hinduism.

Hinduism prides itself on its tolerance of many different approaches to religion, and, consequently, there is a great amount of diversity in beliefs and practices. In fact, it is probably not unfair to say that in order to be a Hindu it is not as important to believe or do certain things as it is to fit into the basic cultural patterns that include veneration of the Vedas (the scriptures), the caste system, and cow protection.

On a philosophical level, there are six schools of Hinduism; one should be careful, however, not to see these as "denominations" or divisions among temples, but as speculations of the religious elite. They are 1) *samkhya*, an atheistic and dualistic school; 2) *yoga*, which adds worship of God and physical discipline to samkhya; 3) *nyaya*, a rationalistic form of thought; 4) *vaisheshika*, a way of classifying all of reality into certain categories; 5) *vedanta*, which stresses the identity between God and the soul (Brahman-atman); and 6) *mimamsa*, a school advocating the literal interpretation of the Vedas.

I am mentioning these schools only in order to show the diversity in Hindu philosophical thought, not because they would be particularly helpful in encountering Hinduism in ordinary life. Here there are three main divisions, playing to a certain extent the role of "denominations." This division is based on which God is the main object of worship, and each of these schools has numerous subgroups. There are the Vaishnavites, who recognize Vishnu and the deities associated with him as highest form of God. Then there are the Shaivites, for whom Shiva or one of his cohorts is supreme. And finally, we have the Shaktites, who devote themselves primarily to one of the many forms of the goddess, such as Kali or Durga. The adherents of these schools do not necessarily exclude each other from worship or practice; there is much overlap, and individual practices are always going to be colored by specific local customs.

Misconceptions.

The biggest misconception about Hinduism is that it is possible to speak about Hinduism in general as though all Hindus believed and practiced the same things. Perhaps the second biggest misconception about Hinduism is that one cannot make any general statements about Hinduism at all. The truth is that, even though no statement about Hinduism may be universally true for all Hindus, there are certainly beliefs and practices, such as karma and reincarnation that most Hindus share.

A particular misconception by Westerners is that Hinduism is essentially pantheistic. Even though it is the case that many Hindus believe in the identity between an impersonal God and the universe, many Hindus (possibly the majority) would be more accurately described as theistic, viz. as believing in a personal God who is not identical with the world. Along that line but going in the opposite direction, a fourth misconception is that Hinduism is polytheistic, promoting belief in many separate gods. Now, obviously, Hinduism has a plethora of deities (popularly represented as 330 million); however, we must be aware of the fact that for many Hindus these are all manifestations of either a personal or an impersonal God. So, it is generally fair to describe Hinduism as polytheistic, but only if we keep in mind that for numerous Hindus, all the gods emanate from the same fundamental deity. Finally, a very popular misconception, stemming from the fame of Mahatma Gandhi, is that Hinduism is essentially pacifistic. This is not the case; Hinduism recognizes the Kshatriyas, or warrior, caste and recognizes the right of society to defend itself with arms if necessary.

Outreach to Hindus.

Christian missions to Hindus goes back to some of the earliest times of the church. According to an ancient tradition, the apostle Thomas was the first to carry the gospel to India, and there were some sporadic efforts to establish a church in India prior to the classical missions era, which dovetailed the colonial period.

In the twentieth century, outreach to Hindus has taken on many forms, while also responding to the fact that Hindus have migrated to many parts of the world and taken their religion with them. On the whole, Hindu Indians have responded to the gospel more readily than their Muslim counterparts. It is estimated that about 3 percent of the population of India is Christian at present.

The key to a Christian witness to Hindus (as is true in various ways for all groups), is to engage the person, not the religion of the person. Because Hinduism in general does not stress humanitarian efforts, outreach projects centered on works of mercy, such as educational facilities, hospitals, or leprosaria, have had great success. In the face of the perplexity engendered by the diversity of Hindu beliefs, the assurance of truth and salvation evidenced by Christians has spoken to many Hindus. Loving relationships that do not recognize the boundaries of caste or social station have led a number of Hindus to find Christ. And finally, sensitive Christian outreach to Hindus has demonstrated that Jesus Christ can free people from the domination of demons and bondage that often is an integral part of Hinduism outside of textbooks.

Author: Paul Reid and Dr. Winfried Corduan.

About Buddhism

Extracted from: A Short Look At Six World Religions, by Sue Bohlin, Probe Ministries.

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Buddhism does not believe in a personal God. It does not have worship, prayer, or praise of a divine being. It offers no redemption, no forgiveness, no hope of heaven, and no final judgment. Buddhism is more of a moral philosophy, an ethical way of life.

In his essay "De Futilitate," C.S. Lewis called Buddhism "a heresy of Hinduism." Buddhism was founded by a Hindu, Siddhartha Gautama, during the sixth century B.C. After being profoundly impacted by seeing four kinds of suffering in one day, Siddhartha committed himself to finding the source of suffering and how to eliminate it. One day he sat down under a fig tree and vowed not to rise again until he had attained enlightenment. After some time, he did so and became the Buddha, which means "enlightened one." He started teaching the "The Four Noble Truths," the most basic of Buddhist teachings.

The First Noble Truth is that life consists of suffering. The Second Noble Truth is that we suffer because we desire those things that are impermanent. This is absolutely central to Buddhism: the belief that desire is the cause of all suffering. The Third Noble Truth is that the way to liberate oneself from suffering is by eliminating all desire. (Unfortunately, it's a self-defeating premise: if you set a goal to eliminate desire, then you desire to eliminate desire.) The Fourth Noble Truth is that desire can be eliminated by following the Eight-Fold path.

In the Eight-Fold Path, the first two steps are foundational to all the others. Step one is Right Understanding, where one sees the universe as impermanent and illusory and believes that the individual does not actually exist. If you ever hear someone say, "The world is an illusion, and so am I. I don't really exist," they're probably exploring Buddhism. (You might want to pinch them and see what they do.) Right Thought means renouncing all attachment to the desires and thoughts of oneself, even as he recognizes that the self doesn't exist.

Other parts of the Eight-Fold path are Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Awareness, and Right Meditation. Ethical conduct is very important in Buddhism. There are commands to refrain from the taking of any life (that includes ants and roaches in your house), stealing, immorality, lying, and drinking. The Eight-Fold Path is a set of steps that describe not only a good life but one which will move the follower toward Nirvana, the goal of Buddhism. Nirvana is not heaven; it is a state of extinction, where one's essence which does not actually exist in the first place is extinguished like a candle flame, marking the end of desire and thus the end of suffering.

One of the important concepts in Buddhism is samsara, a cycle of birth, death and rebirth. It differs from the Hindu concept of reincarnation in that Buddhism teaches there is no self to continue from one life to the next. Another important concept is karma, the belief that you reap what you sow, and your karma follows you through the cycles of samsara. Note the inherent inconsistency here: there is no self to continue from one life to the next, but one's karma does?!

Buddhism says there are many paths to the top of the mountain, so there are many ways to God. Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."

Buddhism: On the Rise in the West

*Excerpted from: Christian Answers Network (ChristianAnswers.Net: As accessed on February 24, 2005)
<http://www.christiananswers.net/evangelism/beliefs/buddhism.html#39> Used by permission*

Adaptability

Buddhism, with its many diverse forms, has teachings and techniques that are custom built to accommodate the needs of any individual.[8] Some may be attracted to a form of Buddhism that is mystically orientated and stresses the elaborate with large golden statues and miraculous stories.[9] Others may be attracted to the Tibetan tradition, with its emphasis on the devotional, spiritual and mystical elements of Buddhism.[10] Burnett observes how the initial appeal for many to Tibetan Buddhism was the colorful art and rituals that accompany it.[11]

Atheism

Buddhism also offers a place for Westerners who have a desire for a religion but have rejected a belief in God. The Dalai Lama, of the Tibetan tradition, has observed how those in the West who do not have any interest in religion and are of an atheistic persuasion will often be attracted to Buddhism because it too "is a kind of atheism" and a "form of humanism." [27] Converts to Buddhism who have previously struggled with a belief in God have claimed to have experienced a freedom by rejecting the metaphysical, and contradictory accounts of the doctrine of God, that theologians argue over.[28]

An Answer to the Problem of Suffering

Another reason for Buddhism's attractiveness to the non-Eastern contemporary is that people are looking for an answer to the problem of suffering. Between the two world wars Buddhism was studied widely in Germany and explains the present day existence of the many groups and societies that have been established there. Humphreys believes that the popularity of Buddhism arose in Germany between the two wars because of desire for peace and an answer to the problem of suffering.[40]

The basic message of Buddhism is centered upon the whole question of the problem of suffering. Causton states that there can be only three possible explanations for the existence of suffering: 1) It is either the will of a supreme being, 2) the result of pure chance, or 3) it is because of a person's own karma which they themselves are responsible for.[41]

Causton points out the difficulty that the Christian has in reconciling suffering with a belief in God and consequently reasons that to believe in such a being one must conclude that it is He who is responsible for both good and suffering.[42] The belief that suffering is caused by chance is also rejected by Causton who observes that one would have to deny the eternity of life and the continuity of cause and effect if this view is held. Causton concludes that bad karma, whereby bad rebirths are seen as simply the result of certain actions, caused by desire (tanha), is the most positive and attractive choice of the three options.[44] Buddhism teaches that karma can change and suffering can cease when a person detaches themselves from desire.[45]

Harvey feels that the Buddhist concept of past karma is the only religiously satisfying explanation to explain why those who are good people undergo seemingly unfair degrees of suffering.[46] Westerners who have previously professed Christianity have been attracted to Buddhism's explanation of suffering because it is simplistic and practical; offering both a diagnosis and a solution.[47]

Tolerance

Many Westerners are attracted to Buddhism because of its apparent tolerance. Although there is a body of teaching, it is not forced on the individual in a dogmatic way.[48] Claxton states that even the Buddhist doctrine of reincarnation does not have to be adhered to.[49] The only requirement that Claxton thinks is necessary is that a person must believe that it is possible for one's personality to change and that things can be seen differently.[50] Room for tolerance is therefore wide.

The Buddha himself taught that there are as many ways of teaching the darma as there are practitioners of it.[51] As well as Buddhism's creedal tolerance, others are attracted because it is not necessary to conform to any particular form of clothing, haircut, or ritual. [52]

Unlike many other religions, Buddhism is also attractive to Europeans not only because of the tolerance that exists within its own system but also in its general acceptance towards other world faiths.[53] It is this acceptance that attracted the Jesuit missionary Hugo Makibi Enomiya-Lassalle (1898-1990) to Buddhism and motivated him to incorporate Zen meditation practice into Catholic worship, proposing 'Zen for Christian'.[54]

Author: Spotlight Ministries

Endnotes

[8] G. Claxton, *The Heart of Buddhism* (Cornwall: Crucible, 1990), 26.

[9] *Ibid.*, 29. As an example of the miraculous Claxton describes how some monks have been known to keep themselves warm while sitting up throughout the night wrapped in wet sheets in a snow storm.

[10] Burnett, 258.

[11] *Ibid.*

[27] D. Biddulph, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Address to the Buddhist Society", *The Third Way, The Journal of the Buddhist Society*, Vol. 71, No. 3, November, 1996, 147.

[28] I.S. Markham, *A World Religions Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996), 148-149.

[40] C. Humphreys, *Buddhism* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974), 29.

[41] Causton, 186.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] *Ibid.*

[44] *Ibid.*

[45] Humphreys, *Buddhism*, 229.

[46] Harvey, 44.

[47] Markham, 148. Markham quotes from a section of the book 'Why Buddhism Makes Sense' where Jane Compson describes how she became dissatisfied with her own cultural option of Christianity and became attracted to Buddhism.

[48] Metz, 242.

[49] *Ibid.*, 30.

[50] *Ibid.*, 31.

[51] Markham, 150.

[52] Claxton, 29.

[53] Biddulph, ed., "Buddhism From a Tibetan Buddhist Perspective", 182. Harvey notes that the only exception to Buddhism's acceptance of other world religions is the FWBO. Although the group has a strong European emphasis, it is extremely critical of Christianity and considers it to be both limited and harmful. Harvey, 317.

[54] Burnett, 254-255.

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The New Age Movement

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

One of these beliefs is monism, the idea that all of reality is essentially one. You and I usually recognize differences between ourselves and between different objects in our world, but the monist sees everything as a single organic whole. From the monistic perspective, we are all part of one another; and, if God exists, we are all part of God. Monism sounds very much like Eastern pantheism, and this similarity has caused many observers to describe the New Age Movement as the invasion of Eastern mysticism into Western culture. In fact, the New Age Movement has its historical roots in European philosophy. What we're seeing is not the adoption of Eastern religion, but the bankruptcy of our own culture.

Let me explain. For centuries Christian theologians maintained that there were three sources of truth: revelation, tradition, and reason. One by one, the philosophers discarded revelation, ignored tradition, and concluded that reason was inadequate. The situation thus became a little scary. There weren't any sources of authority left! Humans don't function very well without some source of authority, some source of hope. With no other place to turn, Western philosophers began to place their hopes in irrational ideas like monism, believing that the problems and inconsistencies of life were more apparent than real and that these problems could be resolved at some deep level that we really can't comprehend. These ideas provided the real foundation for the New Age Movement. It came about because Western philosophy had run out of answers.

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

Monism and Pantheism

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

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

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

Shirley MacLaine came to the conclusion that she was not herself a distinct entity, but that she was instead completely identified with all that surrounded her. This belief that everything is essentially one leads New Age followers to believe in pantheism, the idea that all is God. The unity of all reality tells them that everything is divine, including themselves. If all is one, then there are no distinctions, and all is God. Again, Shirley MacLaine writes, "I

am God, because all energy is plugged into the same source. We are all individualized reflections of the God source. God is in us and we are God."

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

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

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

The Political Agenda of the New Age Movement

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

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

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

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

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

This vision doesn't stop with the Earth, for New Age followers believe that our world will network with other planets, then other galaxies, until the entire universe is in complete harmony as a single organism. From this perspective, the interests of humanity are subordinated to those of the Earth as a whole. The important thing is not whether we ourselves survive, or even whether or not our Earth survives, but whether or not this evolutionary process continues to go forward. Particularly in light of the fact that many people become a part of the New Age Movement because they desire a positive message of hope, their expectation is ultimately a very sad and impersonal one. The individual is lost in the whole process, like a drop of water blending into a cosmic ocean.

Achieving Oneness

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

beyond using one's perceived powers for personal gain. Their commitment to global and universal harmony causes New Age followers to focus their attention on transforming the world. Here their belief that we share the same essential energy means that we can share the same consciousness.

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

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

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

Witnessing to the New Age Follower

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

Since the New Age Movement values experience so highly, it may well be that your personal testimony is the most helpful thing you can communicate to adherents of the New Age. They will usually dismiss your logic and your books, but their own beliefs prevent them from dismissing your experience. By demonstrating the reality of your Christianity and the transformation that the gospel has brought into your life, you appeal to them on their own terms. Naturally, there's something a little disconcerting about a testimonial approach. It means that you must have a more consistent testimony than their peers in the New Age. New Age seminars, for example, provide a great deal of personal support for those in attendance. Visitors feel welcome, they feel loved, and they want to come back just because the people are so friendly and attentive. Do we treat visitors that way in our churches? Do we treat our New Age friends with love and respect even though we disagree with their theology? If we give them rejection instead of encouragement, we're driving them deeper into the New Age.

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

The New Age Movement is very diverse, and it blends in easily with many other religions. One thing that it does not take in very well, however, is the cross of Jesus Christ. Your New Age friends will have a very difficult time accepting the idea that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ. That concept stands against everything they

believe. Understand that they will probably not embrace the gospel quickly, but speak the truth in love. Through your words and through your lifestyle point them to Christ, who is our hope.

Witch Path Will You Choose?

By Sarah Hinlicky

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We were zipping down the interstate on our way to a concert one rainy summer afternoon when my best friend — let's call her Sabrina — turned to me after a short lull in the conversation and said, "Does it bother you that I'm a witch?"

Had I actually known before that very moment that she was a witch, I might have had the wits about me to make an intelligent remark. As it was, I was so shocked by this unprovoked announcement that all I could manage was, "Well, I don't exactly approve of it, but I'm not going to let it come between us."

I shouldn't have been as surprised as I was. Sabrina's religious wanderings had been the source of ongoing distress to me over the course of our five-year best-friendship. She and her family had been nominally Presbyterian when they were rich, and then nominally Catholic when they became unexpectedly poor, and after a while they gave up on church altogether. But those collected Sundays in the pews left very little impression on Sabrina. The everyday life of the Church — weekly worship, talk about sin and atonement, tithing — was much too dull for her to be troubled with. If the subject of religion came up at all, the conversation turned to icons, saints, candles, hell, miracles, relics and myths. The exotic stuff. All of which is the fair inheritance of Christians, but Christians have also put their total faith in the death and resurrection of Christ and try to live up to their baptismal vows — an "ordinary" matter that never much interested Sabrina.

I tried to change the subject. She didn't want to. "This is my birthright," she said. "I was born with this power. The women of my family have been witches for generations. My mom doesn't know she's a witch, but she has the power, too."

My curiosity temporarily took over. "What powers do you have?" I dared to ask.

"I can tell when someone is going to die by looking at the bark on the trees," she answered solemnly. "I can lock up the evil spirits released by Ouija boards. I can communicate with the wolves."

It sounds preposterous, I know. I was half inclined to laugh in her face at her self-delusions and half incensed that she presumed to know anyone's time of death. (I had recently lost my grandmother in a singularly awful way, which greatly heightened my sensitivity.) Instead I politely acknowledged the intensity of her convictions and then succeeded at last in re-routing our discussion back to the concert.

Power Beyond Belief

The name "witch" bears some examination. Most Americans, when they hear the word, conjure up mental pictures of hideous old hags with warts on their noses who try to ruin the good fortunes of virtuous young girls in medieval fairy tales. Those inclined to a slightly more positive image might think of pink-bubble Glinda in *The Wizard of Oz*. ("Are you a good witch or a bad witch?" she coos.) And the historically informed will shudder to recall the horrifically unjust Salem witch trials of 17th century Massachusetts. The witches you meet today don't belong in any of these categories. Though they claim a more venerable pedigree, modern "Wiccans" have their origins entirely in this century, stemming from the deliberate revival of long-dead pagan practices by an Englishman named Gerald Gardner around the turn of the century. Witchcraft is just one part of the larger and vaguer "neopagan" movement, which in turn is one part of the even wider and vaguer New Age movement. None of these new "religions" can be rigidly classified — the notion of dogma is anathema to them — but one can at least accurately say that they are mystical, individualistic and decidedly non-Christian religious expressions reacting against a dominantly Christian society. Wicca specifically is composed mostly but not entirely of women, emphasizes the close ties between humanity and nature, and, if it professes belief in deities at all, those will generally be the Goddess and her consort,

the Horned God, or the members of ancient pantheons (Celtic ones are especially popular). But all this is purely optional; the litmus test for witchcraft is not belief, but power.

In this light, it is extremely important to remember that witches are not Satanists. The two are often equated, a mistake that is not only unfair to Wiccans, but also fails to recognize the real (albeit different) danger in their practices. The very idea of radical evil in the form of Satan is rejected by witches, but this ironically leaves them all the more vulnerable to demonic infiltration. It is easy to see how becoming a Satanist obsessed with the devil is a recipe for trouble, but it's a little harder to understand why repudiating his existence altogether is just as bad. The heart of the matter is that denying the devil makes it impossible to detect his evil presence in anything.

This has two insidious results. The first is the illusion of moral autonomy: without radical evil, there can't be any such thing as sin. At best there are "little evils" that can be overcome by the individual efforts of well-meaning witches. The Wiccan ethical code is very simple: do harm to no one. But that presumes that each and every witch can know for herself exactly what is harmful and what is not. History shows countless examples of the damage done by people who thought that they were actually doing the good (without encouraging mass hysteria, I would like to point out that Hitler wanted to revive pagan German practices since their ethical priorities included ethnic cleansing). All religions have been guilty of serious wrongdoing, but paganism in particular has always been tied to blood (read: sacrifice) and soil (read: local ethnic preference) — a far cry from seeing every person created in the image of God. Although witchcraft today doesn't indulge in such violence, it being a newly revived practice, the more witches emphasize their historical continuity, the more they'll have to face up to this violent potential inherent in their beliefs.

The other result is the conjuring of spirits. Much of the actual practice of witchcraft relies on calling up various powers, whether as all-encompassing as the Goddess or as minor as tree or river spirits. Wiccan holidays are times of heightened activity between the mortal and immortal realms. The presupposition is, of course, that these spirits will either be indifferent at worst or benign at best to the interests of mere mortals. Sabrina spoke to me once about her acute awareness of the local powers in nature, and how she felt constrained to revere them. The spiritual danger in such a compulsion is dire. There is a very good reason why God-fearing people have been forbidden to conjure up spirits since Old Testament times: their interests are most decidedly not indifferent or benign. When witches are led to believe otherwise, it is a further reminder that the devil is the father of all lies. It's an easy conquest: Sabrina, like many witches, denies the existence of truth, too.

Irreconcilable Differences

A year passed. Sabrina and I had once been enthusiastic correspondents, treating our epistle-writing as a highly evolved art form, but our communication began to wane. Not deliberately, or at least we didn't think it was deliberately. I was about to graduate from college, embroiled in the writing of a senior thesis; she was in college also, a long way off from me, and too busy to sustain our old intimacy. We assumed that when the next summer came and we were near each other again, we could just pick up where we left off.

Of course, it wasn't really that simple. Even on the rare occasions that we did scrounge up the cash to indulge in a chat on the phone, I sensed again something strange about her — or at least stranger than before. We seemed to be talking at cross purposes, not really connecting. There were lots of easy explanations for that, though — the long separation, bad moods, school stress. I put the witchcraft thing out of my head, wistfully hoping it was just a passing phase.

It's much easier to see now the source of our increasing personal distance. Christianity and paganism cultivate very different sorts of virtues. The latter emphasizes power: ritual is a flexing of spiritual mastery that thrives on secrecy, itself a potent kind of power. Magic spells are a means manipulating the natural world — there's no such thing as "unnatural" in Wicca — using body and mind as a channel to control natural powers. But the lust for power spills over into the daily life of witches, well beyond the moonlit meetings for magic. Sabrina described to me once the difficulties she was having concealing her witchliness from her boyfriend. She was going away for a weekend with another witch, and she told him, coyly, that they would be doing some "stuff." What "stuff"? inquired the naturally suspicious boyfriend. She eluded the answer, and then agonized over what to tell him. It was perfectly clear, though, that the real thrill was not in any of the "stuff" she was planning on doing, but on having such a stupendous secret to withhold or bestow as she pleased.

Christian spiritual values are quite the opposite. Christianity is the story of giving up power again and again in obedience to the all-powerful God, who in turn gave up His power in the ultimate humiliation of weakness on the cross. The disparity between Christianity and paganism in this respect could hardly be greater. Sabrina unwittingly drove the point home to me once when she thanked me again for the silver St. Brigid's cross I brought her from a trip to Ireland. "I believe the Goddess was using you a bit," she said. "It's one of the most powerful talismans I've ever seen." I could barely contain my fury; in fact, I felt positively violent. I wanted desperately to rip it right from the chain that hung around her neck. Nothing could be more offensive to me than her perversion of the cross on which my Savior died for the sake of her pagan power-play.

Witch Came First

That year of bare-bones friendship was the beginning of the end. The real end began rather innocently: we had some miscommunications via email (a medium that makes it notoriously difficult to convey the exact nuances of expression without resorting to endless smiley faces) and needed to clear the air. That was easily accomplished; they really were just silly misunderstandings. But in the process of patching things up, I inquired if this was not at root a matter of our increasingly great "religious" differences.

"Sarah," she bluntly told me, "I have tried and I cannot be anything but a pagan." I rather doubt she really tried. In any event, she was very pleased with her new identity as a witch. It had been a process of enormous self-discovery, and she had been very sorry not to include me in it. But now that we were being honest about these things, she hoped I would take a look at her new world. Even if I didn't agree with it, I could at least recognize the beneficial change it wrought in her. Instead, I spent the weekend wondering whether I should be angrier at her for making that awful choice, or at God for not calling her more irresistibly to be a Christian.

I knew already that our friendship was over. But it is vitally important to understand just why it was over. It was never a matter of hating her, or damning her, or even thinking that two people with different religious commitments couldn't be friends. I would have lost the certainty that she could offer me good advice when I was in a crisis, but that was a fairly minor aspect of our friendship. No, it came down to a direct challenge to my faith: she wanted me either to roundly condemn her to the fire and brimstone and try to burn her at the stake (which would prove that Christians are intolerant bigots), or to fully affirm her chosen religion as a totally legitimate, true and morally compelling option (which would concede that Wicca is not idolatry).

Naturally, I had no intention of persecuting her; quite aside from that being a decidedly un-Christian thing to do, I loved her too much to want to hurt her, and I still pray for her eventual conversion. Persecution can never accomplish that. But supporting her was equally impossible. She was willfully stumbling into the hands of powers who had slyly persuaded her that she was still in control. As her best friend, I couldn't endorse that, no matter how much it meant to her or how good her own intentions were. Even when witches band together wanting nothing more than a loving spiritual support group, it doesn't change the ugly facts of reality.

We debated these matters back and forth and got nowhere. She tried to beg off by insisting that she still did believe in the Holy Trinity and Jesus the redeeming Son of God. (How this fits in with her proclamation that she could be nothing but a pagan is beyond me; but then, postmodern witches can reject reason quite as easily as revelation.) A classic theological distinction came to mind: the distinction between the mere assent that even demons have, and the faith which puts complete trust in the love of God. Sabrina might have sense enough to believe that the God of Christians exists, but she wouldn't worship Him herself. That would require too much humility.

There was one other matter: if she really was coming into contact with superhuman forces, the consequences could only be disastrous. I couldn't drag her out of a dangerous situation, but I had the responsibility to keep myself away from it. My fondness for her personally was completely clouded over by my recoiling horror at the situation she had put herself in. I was willing to accept any consequences, as long as I had no traffic with these pretenders to godly power. The tragedy was that she had become the point of contact between them and me.

My prediction was right: our friendship went down in flames. She openly scorned my vocation to theology and accused me of deeming her unworthy of my love. The friend I once knew was gone, and I didn't recognize the replacement. The new Sabrina was a monument to spiritual blindness.

The whole dreadful experience was not without its spiritual repercussions for me as well. I was forced to turn my heart inside out and examine my motives. It wouldn't do for me to lose my dearest friend out of some deep-seated

desire to be a martyr. And every time I declared the sole truth of the Gospel against the lies of idolatry, I had to fight off my own demons of pharisaism. I constantly feared that my presentation of the divine word of love would be unloving — and drive her even further away from it.

All these flaws were present in me to some extent; for all my good intentions, I'm still a sinner in need of gracious correction. Finally, though, I was granted the peace of heart — if not mind — to know that this was a sacrifice required of me, and, however reluctantly, I gave it up to God. We can never choose our own crosses, after all, and the crosses that are presented to us are usually the ones we want least to carry. I couldn't have managed it without the love of Christ guiding me through it. But ultimately it was a choice of the ultimate thing in my life: was I going to value friendship above all else, or my God? The seductive notions of tolerance that float around our American culture want us to think that staying on good terms with everybody is the most important thing in the world. There's a grain of truth in that. Our relationships are of extraordinary, even cosmic, importance in our lives. But they can never take priority over the baptismal commitment to our Lord and Savior. At some point, even friendships fail; but God in heaven never does.

RESOURCES

Cults and New Religions Bibliography
Kevin Bywater

GENERAL REFERENCE WORKS

***Abanes, Richard.** *Defending the Faith: a Beginner's Guide to Cults and New Religions.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997.

Don't let the word "beginner's" in the title fool you. The material in this book is what the experts fall back on every time. Unlike so many book on the cults that provide a group-by-group survey, this one progresses doctrine-by-doctrine. He covers introductory issues such as the sociological characteristics of cults, then he turns to the nature of the Bible, the doctrine of God, sin, and salvation. This is a excellent addition to anyone's library on this topic.

Enroth, Ronald, ed. *Evangelizing the Cults: How to Share Jesus with Children, Parents, Neighbors, and Friends Who Are Involved in a Cult.* Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books (Servant Publications), 1990.

If you want some practical suggestions when dealing with people bound in the cults, then this book is for you. The contributors to this book are either former cultists, or have been witnessing for decades to those bound in the cults. A great book even though the chapters vary in quality.

Martin, Walter. *The Kingdom of the Cults.* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1965, 1977, 1985, 1997.

This is *the* standard reference on cults. Walter Martin, commonly known as "The Bible Answer Man," was *the* leading authority on cults for most of his life. This book discusses every major cult (with the exception of some newer cults), and several world religions. One of the best features of this book is that it provides you with a solid biblical/theological assessment of the various beliefs of the cults. A Must for any cult reference library! The latest revised and updated edition is even better. I also includes a searchable CD-Rom of the entire book!

Martin, Walter. *The New Cults.* Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1980.

As a supplement to *The Kingdom of the Cults*, this book surveys and analyzes the newer cultic movements like The Way International, Silva Mind Control, The Children of God (The Family of Love), among others. With Martin's two books, you will have a great library analyzing all of the major cultic movements.

Mather, George A., and Larry A. Nichols. *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

The most useful reference tool for the study of comparative religions to be printed this decade. Provides brief but substantive sketches of basically all religions, comparing most with Christianity.

SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY OF THE CULTS

Martin, Paul R., Dr. *Cult Proofing Your Kids*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993.

“How to Spot a Cult”; “How to Cult Proof Your Schools”; “What To Do When Your Child Joins a Cult”; “How To Help People Recover From Cultic Involvement”; these are just some of the topics that are covered in this book. Dr. Martin has done a great service for the Christian community by encouraging us to keep the psychological elements of cult involvement in mind when dealing with those bound or formerly bound in cult groups.

Rhodes, Ron. *The Culting of America: The Shocking Implications for Every Concerned Christian*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994.

Rhodes examines the shifts that have taken place in American culture that have paved the way for *The Culting of America*. Providing a survey of the cultic tendencies, Rhodes looks at the breakdown of our churches and families, and the misuse, abuse and disuse of the Bible. He then moves to the influence of the media (in particular Hollywood); and then to education, business, and other faddish arenas for the cults. This book is a must if you want to see how the cults have made inroads into our culture, and how you can effectively deal with them.

Scott, Latayne C. *Why We Left a Cult*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993.

This book provides insight into why these six individuals left the cult they were in. Chapter to chapter quality and insight varies.

BIBLE (MIS)INTERPRETATION

***Sire, James. *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980.**

A great aid in understanding and answering how cults misuse and abuse the Bible. If you plan to spend much time witnessing to people trapped in cults, or if you just want to be ready when you encounter them, then you must get this book.

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

***Rhodes, Ron. *Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Jehovah's Witnesses*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1993.**

This is probably the most helpful book ever written on Jehovah's Witnesses! The questions provided for the reader to ask JWs are invaluable. The method of witnessing found here is bound to be one of the more effective. If you want to be ready to deal with almost everything JWs will throw at you, then you must have this book. Highly Recommended!

Reed, David A. *Jehovah's Witnesses Answered Verse By Verse*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991.

David Reed has done us a great service by surveying the most common verses used by the JWs. He not only provides adequate refutation of the JW interpretation, but also covers the proper meaning of the texts. This book, coupled with Rhodes' book above, will be a great arsenal of information, providing thorough preparation for witnessing to JWs. Reed also has a number of other helpful books on the JWs that are worth reading.

MORMONISM

***Beckwith, Francis J., et al. *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism: The Great Divide Between Mormonism and Christianity*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998.**

Beckwith teams up with a number of Christian apologists in this volume. Beckwith defends the classical and biblical concept of God, Geisler defends the Bible, Rhodes focuses on the person Christ, Phil Roberts defends the gospel, and Jerald and Sandra Tanner seek to unravel the fact that Mormons use our vocabulary but not our dictionary. A helpful volume.

Cares, Mark J. *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*. Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing, 1993.

If you want to understand the Mormon mind and Mormon culture, and how to witness to Mormons based on

this understanding, then you can't be without this book. The tools needed to take a positive approach to Mormons are amply provided in this volume.

***Rhodes, Ron, and Marian Bodine.** *Reasoning from the Scriptures with Mormons.* Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1995.

One of the most helpful books for practical advice and guidance on witnessing to Mormons. The questions provided for the reader to ask Mormons are invaluable. The book will prepare you to answer Mormon apologetics and present the Gospel with grace.

Tanner, Jerald, and Sandra Tanner. *The Changing World of Mormonism.* Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981.

A book written by those who train the experts on Mormonism. The Tanners' material is phenomenal and ground-breaking. Their research and ability to uncover little-known facts is unsurpassed. I cannot recommend their material highly enough. This book surveys the doctrinal changes, false prophecies, and historical cover-ups of the Mormon hierarchy.

White, James R. *Is the Mormon My Brother: Discerning the Differences Between Mormonism and Christianity.* Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1997.

James just won't let the Mormon theologians and apologists get away with their rhetorical claims to be truly Christian. This is an excellent example of Christian scholarship and argumentation. A helpful volume for those who deal with well-read Mormons.

RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS AND MINISTRIES

Summit Ministries, Kevin Bywater, PO Box 207, Manitou Springs, CO 80829; (719) 685-9103; www.summit.org.
Summit Ministries is a Christian youth leadership training camp located in Manitou Springs, Colorado. Kevin is the Director of Curriculum and Research. As a former Mormon, he devotes much of his time teaching Christians about pseudo-Christian cults, often ministering to people deceived by these cults. You can find several essays by Kevin on Summit Ministries' homepage.

Christian Research Institute PO Box 500, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693-0500; (714)855-9926.
CRI publishes the *Christian Research Journal*, a quarterly journal "Examining Today's Religious Movements/Giving Reasons for Christian Faith." I recommend that you subscribe to this journal.

Watchman Fellowship PO Box 13340, Arlington, TX 76094-0340; (817)277-8098.
Watchman Fellowship publishes *The Watchman Expositor*, a free monthly journal that focuses on "apologetics...new religious movements, cults, the occult and the New Age." Get on their mailing list!

www.probe.org (An excellent resource website for research in a variety of topics including Cults and Religions.)

www.christiananswers.net (Another excellent resource.)

There are a number of very helpful homepages on the Internet. To find them, just do a search for the topic you are interested in; but keep in mind, the cults are on the Internet as well!