

Introduction to Cults

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List of Assignments:

*Read all assigned books on cults.

*Prepare a notebook containing the following information on at least **four** major cults:

1. **Founder / Background**
2. **Explanation of major teachings of each cult.**
3. **Examples of each cult's literature.**
4. **For each of the topics below - list five Bible verses that relate to Biblical teaching on that topic:**

- **God**
- **Jesus Christ**
- **The Holy Spirit**
- **Sin**
- **Redemption & the Blood of Christ**
- **Salvation**
- **Retribution**

*In your own words, *using Scripture verses as well*, **write** or **type** an explanation of your own fundamental beliefs as you would give them to a member of a cult.

If attending classes, keep a notebook of all class lectures.

The Rise of Cults

*But there were **false prophets** also among the people, even as there shall be **false teachers** among you, who privily shall bring in, damnable **heresies**, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.*

II Peter 2:1 --2

Until the 1800s, cults, as we know them, did not exist. **Cults** are *counterfeit church groups that go under the guise of Christianity*. The most influential cults originated in the 1800s, and each has continued to grow, while new cults continued to spring up throughout the 20th century.

Though cults differ greatly from each other, they all have **one basic error** in common--they teach **salvation by works** rather than salvation by grace through faith. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith . . . not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Eph. 2:8-9). Since Satan's goal is to keep people from being saved, he does not mind people being religious or believing certain Biblical doctrines, as long as they are wrong about how to be saved, for then they will remain in the kingdom of darkness.

The term *cult commonly* applies to any false system of worship that:

- 1. Arises within professed Christianity**
- 2. Destroys or distorts salvation into a doctrine of works**
- 3. Detracts from or adds to the Bible as God's authoritative, inspired revelation**
- 4. Claims to be the purest form of Christian faith.**

Cults desire to hide under the cloak of Christianity. They *want* to be considered just another church or denomination; in this disguise their false doctrine is more secure, allowing them to attract more followers.

Exposing the Cults

As the cults grew, churches exposed their false beliefs and identified them as cults. An expert in recognizing counterfeit money was once asked how long he had studied counterfeit money; he quickly responded that he had never studied counterfeit money but that he had spent his whole life studying real money. In the same way, studying the truth of God's Word makes one able to recognize and identify Satan's counterfeits.

God wants error to be exposed: "By their fruits ye shall know them"; we need to know what the cults are, so we can identify and avoid them.

An *in-depth study of the cults is neither necessary nor wise*, for it can trap unwary souls. There is often a supernatural allurements to false doctrine. The Bible speaks about "seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" when warning about false prophets. God gives these guidelines for believers regarding false teachers: "Beware of false prophets" Matt. 7:15 and "mark them...avoid them" Rom.16:17, 18.

World Religions Are Not Listed as Cults

Major *world religions* such as Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are not listed in the category of cults. The following illustration compares the concepts of the world's religions.

A man falls in a deep ditch and needs to get out:

Confucius walks by and says,

"A wise man would not walk so near the pit to fall in. "

Buddha walks by and says,

"Your desires make you want out. Change your desires. "

A *Hindu* walks by and says,

"You just think you are miserable in the pit; change your thinking.."

Jesus walks by and **helps the man out of the pit.**

Cult: MORMONISMDate Founded: **1830**Founder: **Joseph Smith (1805-1844)**Name: **Mormons, or The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints** (shortened to **LDS**)Headquarters: **Salt Lake City, Utah****History**

Joseph Smith was born in Sharon, Vermont, in 1805, and spent most of his youth in *Palmyra*, New York. His family was very poor and bitter toward all organized religion. Joseph enthusiastically engaged in treasure hunts, particularly searching for buried money. In 1826, he was tried in court for misrepresenting his ability to find buried treasure.

Joseph Smith alleged that God appeared to him in 1820 and told him that all denominations had corrupted the gospel and that he was not to associate with any of them. Smith claimed that beginning in 1823 he experienced a series of visions from the angel **Moroni**. Moroni showed him a set of *gold tablets containing the true gospel* written in "reformed Egyptian characters." He supplied Joseph with two transparent stones through which he could *Translate* the tablets' writing. Allegedly, Moroni reclaimed the tablets when the translation work ended. This translation work became known as the *Book of Mormon*.

Mormons teach that in 1829 *John the Baptist appeared* to Joseph Smith and a colleague, Oliver Cowdrey, and bestowed upon them the *authority of the Aaronic priesthood*. Later, *Peter, James, and John appeared* and authorized them to be Melchizedek priests. Then, in 1836, *Elijah* gave them prophetic authority. *Moses* showed up later that day to give them the keys of the gathering of Israel.

Six "believers" organized the Church of Latter-Day Saints in 1830. Smith and his followers claimed this was the true church and **Joseph Smith** was God's true prophet. Persecuted, they moved from New York to Ohio, to Missouri, and to Illinois. The Mormons established the colony of Nauvoo in Illinois, but trouble erupted. Joseph and his brother Hyrum were accused of immorality, harboring criminals, and counterfeiting. The brothers were imprisoned and subsequently murdered by a mob that stormed the jail. To his followers, this made Joseph Smith a martyr. In 1847, Smith's successor, *Brigham Young* led his *twenty-five wives* and Mormon followers to *Salt Lake City, Utah*.

In the frontier days of America, circuit-riding preacher Peter Cartwright wrote about Mormons in Illinois who continually sought to mislead people from the true gospel and to confuse new converts. In Cartwright's autobiography, he tells about Mormons *speaking in tongues* and *claiming miracles*; he considered the Mormons a cult and their false teaching a Satanic hindrance to the gospel.

The Mormon church works hard to make itself appear respectable and even admirable, but it cannot hide the lies of its leaders and the falsity of its claims. It is no secret that Joseph Smith, the great "prophet" and founding father of the cult, *lied repeatedly to cover up his polygamy, necromancy* (communication with the dead), *and occultic pursuits*.

Smith's successors were (and are) no better than he. Paul Dunn, a recent Mormon leader, admitted in an interview with the Associated Press that "he doesn't consider it deceitful to *exaggerate* or alter facts. He said his technique is to "combine" elements of several true stories to create a story that will better convey a message. In the case of his false claim to having played for the St. Louis Cardinals, he said youngsters can relate better to a major league team than to the farm teams for which he briefly played" (Associated Press).

Publications

The *Book of Mormon* is used in place of the Bible. *Pearl of Great Price* and *Doctrine and Covenants* supplement the Book of Mormon. Several periodicals, including the *Deseret News*, a weekly newspaper, and *Ensign*, a monthly magazine, are also published and circulated by the Mormons.

Missionary teams

In communities around the world, young, well-groomed Mormon men or women go by twos, house to house, presenting an appeal for Mormon converts, thus causing the cult to multiply and spread. Each young person in a Mormon family who seeks recognition in Mormonism is asked to devote two years to Mormon missionary work under his family's financial sponsorship. Mormonism today has over 7.5 million followers, which includes 4 million members in the United States.

Promotional features

- Well-known entertainers and leaders in government and business are Mormons
- The famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir
- The Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City attracts thousands of visitors each year
- Brigham Young University in Utah is Mormon in sponsorship and doctrine
- The Mormon church attracts many people from all levels of society by stressing: family, moral values, and clean living. Mormons present to the world as a very moral, family oriented group. However, statistics from the state of Utah--where 70 percent of the population is Mormon--suggest otherwise. In that predominantly Mormon state, the divorce rate has exceeded the national average every year but three since 1890, according to the 1976 Statistical Abstract of Utah and The World Almanac. More than a third of the women in Utah marry while still in their teens, and two thirds of these young brides are pregnant before marriage, according to 1978-1.979 Planned Parenthood Bulletin. Utah has also been known for its high rate of teen suicide, venereal disease, alcoholism, and crime.
- Television ads stressing positive family values enhance the Mormon image to the general public. Hundreds of thousands of advertising dollars are spent to attract converts to Mormonism by emphasizing the virtues of Mormon family life.

Mormon Doctrine

- Joseph Smith is God's prophet to summon apostate church members to the "true" gospel of Mormonism. The Mormon Articles of Faith state: "(3) *We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, **by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.***"
- Joseph Smith's writings were given by revelation and are authoritative and equal to Scripture. The Mormon Articles of Faith state: "(8) *We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.*" The Book of Mormon is filled with errors. It contradicts both the Bible and itself, disagrees with important doctrines of Mormonism, contains erroneous descriptions of geography, and is filled with other mistakes and exaggerations. Despite more than 4,000 "revisions," the Book of Mormon remains what it was from the beginning--*a myth*.
- ◆ Mormons call themselves Latter-Day Saints (LDS) because they claim the **true gospel** was restored to Joseph Smith in the *latter days of the 1820s*.
- God is a man, and man can become a god. ·
- There are *many gods*, and *they all have wives*.
- Mormonism teaches that trillions of planets are ruled by *countless gods who once were human like us*.
- Everyone must stand at the final judgment before Joseph Smith, the Mormon Jesus, and Elohim. Those sealed in the eternal marriage ceremony expect to become *polygamous gods* in the Celestial Kingdom, ruling over other planets and *spawning new families throughout eternity*. Lorenzo Snow, past president of the LDS church, wrote the following poem:

*Man's Destiny
Still, its no phantom that we trace
Man's ultimatum in life's race
This royal path has long been trod
By righteous men, each now a God:
As Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, too,
First babes, then men--to gods they grew.
As man now is our God once was;
As now God is, so man may be-
Which doth unfold man's destiny . . .*

- They baptize for the dead.
- Through performing *secret temple rituals for themselves and the dead*, they hope to prove their worthiness and thus *become gods*.
- Mormons believe in *continuing revelation* through the LDS leadership in Salt Lake City.
- In the past, they publicly *practiced polygamy* (more than one wife); today, polygamy is a crime punishable by law, but the LDS church has never repudiated the doctrine of polygamy.

Cult: JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Date Founded: **1870**

Founder: **Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916)**

Headquarters: **Brooklyn, New York**

History

At the age of 18, Charles Taze Russell started a Bible class near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Six years later he began calling himself pastor of this class, which called itself the *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*. Russell objected to the Bible's teaching of eternal punishment in hell; he taught that the wicked will be annihilated—cease to exist. Although he denied that he was influenced by the teachings of *Ellen G. White*, the founder of Seventh-Day Adventism, Russell followed several of her teachings about the end time and eternity.

"By their fruits ye shall know them" Russell was arrogant and untruthful. In court, he testified that he knew Greek. However, when he was given a Greek New Testament and asked to read the letters of the alphabet, he was unable to do so. He was forced to retract his claim to know Greek.

Russell's wife sued him for divorce because of an indiscreet relationship with another woman; she was granted the divorce on grounds that his conceit and domination made her life unbearable. Later, to avoid paying alimony, Russell transferred his property to corporations and societies he Charles Tate Russell controlled. Furthermore, "Pastor" Russell was repeatedly accused of persuading sick persons to turn over their assets to his organizations.

The first publication of Russell's Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was a magazine, *Zion's Watchtower*. In 1886, Russell began to publish a series of volumes, *Studies in the Scriptures*, that contained his comments on the Scriptures. He claimed that these writings were more important to read than the Scriptures.

Russell died in 1916, during a cross-country train ride. His funeral eulogy was delivered by Judge J. F. Rutherford, who succeeded him as president of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

After Russell's death, ex-judge Rutherford assumed the leadership of the fast-growing Watchtower Society and led the cult through a period of rapid growth (1916-1942). In 1931, he renamed the Society *Jehovah's Witnesses*.

Under the leadership of their third president, Nathan Knorr (1942-1977), the Jehovah's Witnesses produced the New World Translation of the Bible, which distorts Bible passages about the deity of Christ.

Identifications

- Jehovah's Witnesses' main appeal has been to lower-income and distressed people. · Their meeting place is called *Kingdom Hall*.
- They zealously promote their organization by door to door visitation. They visit in pairs, often an adult and child together, offering copies of their *Awake* magazine and promoting prophecy lectures.
- They refuse blood transfusions and oppose military service, voting, holding political office, and jury duty.
- They will not salute a nation's flag believing that all governments are of Satan.

Jehovah's Witnesses Doctrine

- They *deny the deity of Christ* and His bodily resurrection.
- They believe that God created Jesus as the angel Michael, who became Jesus at the incarnation. After dying on the cross, Jesus returned to His spirit form as the angel Michael.
- They reject the doctrine of the Trinity, claiming that Jehovah is God's true name and they are His witnesses.

They do not believe in a Literal hell.

They believe that those who gain salvation by works (efforts in promoting the cause of Jehovah's Witness) will be allowed to live on earth during the Millennium.

- They claim to be the 144,000 witnesses during the Tribulation of the Book of Revelation. When their membership surpassed that number, they solved this problem by explaining that although God has limited to 144,000 the number of those who will rule in heaven with Christ, an innumerable host of faithful Jehovah's Witnesses will live on earth throughout eternity.

Cult: CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Date Founded: **1877**(officially organized)

Founder: **Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy** (1821-1910)

Name: **The First Church of Christ, Scientist**

Headquarters: **Boston, Massachusetts**

History

Born July 16, 1821, near Concord, New Hampshire, Mary Baker was the youngest of six children. She was a sickly child whose frequent bouts with illness prohibited her from receiving more than a limited education. Because of her prolonged illness, including a chronic spinal ailment, Mary became *profoundly absorbed in questions about sickness and health*.

She married George W. Glover in 1843, but he died a year later. In 1853, she married a dentist, Daniel Patterson. His interest in questions of health matched hers, but the couple did not get along well. Dr. Patterson accused Mary of throwing tantrums. The marriage suffered a separation and eventually a divorce.

In 1862, Mary Baker Glover Patterson visited Phineas P. Quimby, a professed healer, who rejected medicine and surgery and *claimed the sick could be healed by a state of mind*. Allegedly, Mary found help in this *system of mind over matter*. She then immersed herself in Quimby's teachings.

When Quimby died, Mary became ill again. In 1866, after suffering a severe fall, she began to devise a *system of "Christian" "science"*, "based upon false interpretations of scripture. A few of her disciples developed a wide reputation as healers, and before long, Mary was teaching her system to others for a fee.

She produced the book, ***Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures***, which became the textbook of Christian Science.

In 1877, she married Asa G. Eddy, one of her followers. Two years later, Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy organized *The First Church of Christ, Scientist*. In 1883, she founded the *Christian Science Journal*; in 1898, the *Christian Science Sentinel*; and in 1908, the *Christian Science Monitor*.

In spite of her denial that sickness and death are real, Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy died. She left behind a cult that included Christian Science's Mother Church in Boston and numerous branch churches. (It is interesting to note that several cults were started by women.)

Identifications

- Christian Science **Reading Rooms** are located in business areas for the public to read Christian Science writings.· In their services, "*readers*" publicly read from Christian Science writings.
- *Christian Science Monitor* is a widely circulated daily newspaper that stresses the positive aspect of news.

Christian Science Doctrine

- The writings of Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy are *considered divinely inspired*. Although Mary claimed God dictated *Science and Health* to her, she subsequently hired a clergyman to correct the grammar.
- Christian Science teaches that:
 - God is an eternal idea
 - Christ was the expression of the idea
 - Angels are pure thoughts from God
 - Evil is unreal
 - Matter does not exist
 - Death is an illusion
 - Sin and hell do not exist
 - The *need for salvation does not exist*
- Though the organizational name is Christian Science, the cult is neither Christian nor scientific. Its *healers*, called *practitioners*, try to persuade their patients that ***sickness exists only as an error in the mind***.

The practical aspect of their false doctrine is seen in media reports that Christian Science followers will not give medicine to their children nor permit family members to undergo surgery. (*Example*: in 1990, a couple was convicted of manslaughter for failing to consult a doctor when their two-year-old son became ill; the autopsy showed the boy died of a bowel obstruction, which could have been medically corrected.)

Cult: SCIENTOLOGYDate Founded: **1953**Founders: **L. Ron Hubbard**Name: **The Church of Scientology**

Scientology is a very difficult religion to summarize in just a few paragraphs, let alone in a few pages. It was founded in 1953 by fiction author L. Ron Hubbard, just four years after he made the statement, "I'd like to start a religion. That's where the money is," to Lloyd Eshbach; quoted by Eshbach in *Over My Shoulder*. That's where he found wealth, also--Hubbard became a multi-millionaire. An easier question to ask would be, "What are the similarities between Christianity and Scientology?" The answer to that would be, "There are no similarities."

Scientology teaches that mankind is an immortal being (called a Thetan) not originally from this planet that is trapped by matter, energy, space, and time (MEST). Salvation for a Scientologist comes through a process called 'auditing,' whereby 'engrams' (basically, memories of past pain and unconsciousness that create energy blockage) are removed. Auditing is a very lengthy process and can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. When all engrams are finally removed, the Thetan can once again control MEST instead of being controlled by it. Until salvation, each Thetan is constantly reincarnated.

Scientology is a very expensive religion to associate with. Every aspect of Scientology has some sort of fee associated with it. This is why Scientology's "pews" are filled only with the wealthy. It is also a very strict religion, and very punitive against those who would try to leave behind its teachings and membership. Its "scriptures" are limited solely to the writings and teachings of L. Ron Hubbard.

Scientology is, without a doubt, a cult: Its teachings are taken from science fiction and eastern mythologies; It promotes man as the ultimate power in the universe--he just hasn't realized it yet; Salvation comes through an extremely expensive process of mind games; and it categorically denies the existence of the God of the Bible, Heaven, and Hell. To a Scientologist, Jesus Christ was just another nice guy who unfortunately was wrongfully put to death, and whose story ends at that death.

Though Scientologists will claim that Scientology is compatible with Christianity, the Bible counters each and every point of belief they hold to: God is the sovereign and only creator of the universe (Genesis 1:1); Mankind was created by God (Genesis 1:27); the only salvation available to man is by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:8); salvation is a free gift that mankind can do nothing to earn (Ephesians 2:8-9); and Jesus Christ is alive and well, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father even now (Acts 2:33; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3), awaiting the time when He will gather His children to Himself to reside with Him for eternity in Heaven. Everybody else will be cast into a very real Hell, separated from God (Revelation 20:15).

Scientology differs from Biblical Christianity on every important doctrine; differences are summarized below:

God: Scientology believes that there are multiple gods and that some gods are above other gods. Biblical Christianity, on the other hand, recognizes the One and Only True God who revealed Himself to us in the Bible and through Jesus Christ. Those that believe in Him cannot believe the false concept of God as taught in Scientology.

Jesus Christ: Like almost all other cults, Scientology denies the deity of Christ. Instead of having a biblical view of who Christ is and what He did, they assign to Him the characteristics of some sort of lesser God who has obtained a sort of legendary status over the years. On the other hand, the Bible clearly teaches that Jesus was God in the flesh and through His incarnation He could act as a sacrifice for our sins. It is through Christ's death and resurrection that we can have the hope of eternal life with God.

Sin: Scientology believes in the inherent goodness of man and that "It is despicable and utterly beneath contempt to tell a man he must repent, that he is evil." On the other hand, the Bible teaches that man is a sinner and the only hope for him is that he repent of his sins and acknowledge Christ as his Lord and Savior.

Salvation: Scientology believes in reincarnation and that personal salvation in one's lifetime is freedom from the cycle of birth and death associated with reincarnation. They believe that religious practice of all faiths is the universal way to wisdom, understanding, and salvation. On the other hand, the Bible teaches that there is only one way of salvation and that is through Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6.

Scientology will only lead you away from God and eternal life, and the Bible will lead you to God and eternal life. There is nothing to gain by associating with scientology and everything to lose.

Cult: UNITY SCHOOL OF CHRISTIANITY

Date Founded: **1889**(first issue of *Modern Thought*)

Founders: **Charles and Myrtle Fillmore**

Name: **Unity School of Christianity**

Headquarters: **Kansas City, Missouri**

History

Heavily influenced by New Thought, which emphasized the unity of all religions and focused on positive thinking as a major contributor to health, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore teamed their talents to promote the Unity School of Christianity. Charles had experienced poor medical care after becoming handicapped as a result of a skating accident when he was a youth. This biased him against traditional health care. Myrtle, raised a Methodist, questioned the beliefs of her church and developed a theology that included what she saw as **good in all religions**.

Together, Charles and Myrtle **studied metaphysical subjects** and religions. Believing that life was energy, they taught that this energy could be communicated to parts of the body to generate good health. The mind could speak words of truth until the physical organs responded.

Myrtle developed the idea of *healing*; Charles edited the first magazine about it. She led followers in *meditation*; he gave the name "**Unity**" to the system of thought and turned it into a *worldwide organization*. Eventually Unity became a huge publishing venture with direct mail and radio segments giving it a broad appeal.

Promotional features

- Unity is promoted strongly through its **publications, radio spots, newspaper ads** and headquarters **conferences**.
- Entertainment celebrities often promote the teachings of Unity.
- Unity's publications include magazines such as *Unity* and *Wee Wisdom*.
- Unity perceives itself as more of a school than a church; therefore its appeal is more to the educated. Many students of Unity are also members of mainline denominational churches.

Unity Doctrine

- Everything visible emanates from one spirit. (This idea is similar to pantheism-, the idea that *everything is God*.)
- It views man as part of God--like a drop of water is a part of the ocean.
- Unity *encourages positive thinking* and a constant looking for the good in people, religions, and situations.
- Unity draws what it perceives as good in any religion and utilizes it into its teaching.

Cult: ARMSTRONGISM

Date Founded: **1934** (100 years after Mormonism)

Founder: **Herbert W. Armstrong (1892-1986)**

Name: **Worldwide Church of God (sometimes called "*British Israelism*")**

Headquarters: **Pasadena, California**

History

Born in 1892 in Des Moines, Iowa, Herbert W. Armstrong was an average student with an avid interest in the writings of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, and Epictitus. He wanted to become a success in life, and chose *advertising* as his avenue to success. In time, he became a highly successful publishing sales representative in Chicago, but the depression of 1920 wiped him out financially.

Armstrong became interested in the Bible in 1924, when a neighbor lady convinced his wife that she should observe the Sabbath instead of worshiping on Sunday. Herbert, who saw this as a threat to his financial and social goals, challenged Mrs. Armstrong's newfound conviction and began to study to prove her wrong. However, he emerged from his studying on the side of his wife and the neighbor lady and soon joined their group.

His neighbor's group, The Church of God Adventist, ordained Armstrong in 1931, but within two years he left the group. In 1934, he formed "The Radio Church of God," which became a nationwide vehicle to spread his teachings across America. His publication, *The Plain Truth*, carried his teachings into homes and businesses. Today, this magazine's circulation runs in the millions.

Armstrong's son, *Garner Ted Armstrong*, rose to prominence in his religious organization. His looks and excellent speaking ability enabled him to win many new members to the cult. Several times Herbert dismissed his son, Garner Ted, from his duties because of reported involvement in *adultery* and *gambling*. After each dismissal, Garner Ted repented, received his father's forgiveness, and was reinstated in leadership. A final break occurred in 1978 when Garner Ted attempted to seize control of the organization while his father was ill. His father later ousted him, and Garner Ted established his own following, the Church of God International.

Identifications

- The followers do not attend church but religiously listen to Armstrongism's radio programs or watch the television programs (both called *The World Tomorrow*).
- Followers are forbidden to celebrate Christmas and Easter.
- Followers are taught to avoid involvement in politics.
- Followers must not serve in the armed forces.
- Voting and even PTA membership are forbidden.
- Use of modern medicine is forbidden.
- Each fall the followers celebrate the Old Testament ***Feast of Tabernacles*** with large *Worldwide Church of God* rallies in resort locations around the world. In 1992, they met in 109 cities in 54 countries to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, using their tithes to pay for their family expenses for the week.

Promotional Features

- Known nationwide by its **Plain Truth** magazine and broadcast, "***The World Tomorrow***."
- Armstrongism thrives on attractive publications and interesting radio and television programs which appeal to a wide segment of society. Their publications are always without charge. Having a background in advertising, Armstrong well understood the power of radio, television, and publications. He knew how to appeal to the public with attractive full-color, interesting publications.

Armstrongism Doctrine

- Armstrongism teaches Sabbath observation and salvation by Works. By demanding obedience to Old Testament laws, it makes **legalism** the means of salvation.
- It **denies the doctrine of the Trinity**, the finished work of Christ on the cross, and eternal punishment.
- It insists that people of Anglo-Saxon origin are descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. Because of this teaching, the cult is sometimes called **British Israel**.
- There are **no local church buildings** or meeting places, which means there are no local expenses.
- The tithes of followers are sent to the headquarters, making the organization wealthy. For 1981, the income was reported to be \$66 million. In 1992, membership was estimated at 150,000 worldwide. Membership is limited to those who receive an application, complete it, and pass an interview by showing a willing acceptance of and compliance with Armstrongism's leadership, beliefs, and practices.

Non-Christian Cults

The 1800s spawned cults under the name of Christianity, and it also spawned non-Christian cults. Of those, we include a brief summary of three.

Bahai (1843)

The cult of Bahai began in Persia (Iran) in the early 1800s when a young merchant, calling himself the "Bab" (*Gate*), began to preach the coming of a great prophet.

Shortly after Persian Muslims murdered the Bab, one of his followers arose, claiming to be the prophet of whom the Bab had spoken, the last true successor of Mohammed. Bahauallah taught that all religions are essentially the same and that all of the great prophets (among whom he included Jesus, Mohammed, and Buddha) were equally divine. He claimed to bring the latest and greatest divine revelation to mankind---the culmination of all religions. In time, the early 1900s, the cult spread to the United States, where the Bahai established a temple in Wilmette, a suburb of *Chicago*. This *temple* became the international headquarters for this group. The main objective of the cult is *unity--religious, social, and economic*. Their goals include worldwide, compulsory education; international peace; unity and brotherhood among men; and social and economic equality (communism). In essence, the Bahai call for the *one world government* of the Antichrist.

Spiritualism (1848)

Although man for centuries has sought to communicate with the dead, Spiritualism as an organized *religion* began in New York in 1848, when Katherine and Margaret Fox developed a code which supposedly enabled them to communicate with the spirit world. The young sisters soon became famous, and Spiritualism attracted the attention of curious people throughout the United States and Britain. At first, small *groups* of Spiritualists gathered in homes; then, in 1893, Spiritualists in Chicago organized the National Spiritualist Association. Although the Fox sisters later admitted that their system was a *hoax*, and many Spiritualists have been exposed as *frauds*, the cult; continues to intrigue many. Spiritualists are best known for their *mediums, persons who allegedly have the ability to communicate with the spirit world*, and for the meetings, *seances*, they hold.

Spiritualists deny Christ's deity, claiming He was just a medium, and deny the Biblical doctrines of heaven and hell. They believe all men live after death as spirits in one of several "spheres of higher existence." In their "communication" with the spirit world, they open the door to *demonic influence* and violate the Biblical teaching against such practices (Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:6; Deut. 18:10-12).

Theosophy (1870s)

Theosophy began with the teachings of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky of Russia, a Spiritualist medium who in 1875 organized the Theosophical Society of New York. Madame Blavatsky combined the teachings of Spiritualism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, claiming, much like the prophet of Bahai, that there is *truth in all religions*. At the heart of Theosophy is the ***pantheistic view*** that God is an impersonal, *supreme force* present in all things. Man is described as a "Divine Fragment" whose goal is to become "one" with this divine force through the process *reincarnation*. Theosophists teach that Christ was merely a man who attained perfection, suggesting that he was no more divine than Mohammed or Buddha; according to Theosophy, all men will eventually become "Christ." Thus humanism is also a strong element in Theosophy, making it; an appealing religion to many who would be their own god.

How We Should Respond When Encountering a Cult

God gives us instruction regarding those who teach or embrace the wrong doctrines of the cults:

Receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. *II John 10*

Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and **avoid them**. *Rom. 16:17*

*If any man ... consent not... to the doctrine which is according to godliness . . . **from such withdraw thyself.***

I Tim. 6:3, 5

Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. *II Peter 3:17*

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. *Matt. 7:15, 16*

Guidelines to follow when encountering a person from a cult:

1. Be polite, respectful, and courteous to the person as an individual.
2. Avoid an argumentative spirit. In a non-emotional manner, state your Biblical belief that specifically contradict their basic cultic beliefs.

Example:

When Jehovah's Witnesses knock at your door, do not invite them into your home to discuss their or your beliefs. Rather, standing at your door, say to them that you believe that Jesus is God and that there is a literal Hell, and therefore you have nothing to discuss with them. Do not take their literature. Briefly conclude the conversation and politely close the door. If you encounter them other than at your door, state your beliefs that counter their false beliefs and refuse to discuss their doctrine. After you have stated your beliefs, excuse yourself and depart their company.

3. Cult members frequently say they came out of mainline denominations. This is probably true--those who turn from the truth become easy prey for false doctrine. You may find it necessary to be abrupt in briefly stating your Biblical beliefs and departing, for they are well trained in asking leading questions to stimulate a discussion (supposedly searching for truth). Because they are deeply indoctrinated in their beliefs and trained to combat standard Biblical beliefs, they can easily confuse the average believer.
4. Avoid agreeing to continue the conversation by meeting later to discuss their doctrine. This becomes a trap to ensnare individuals into the cult.

II John 10, 11 instructs us:

"If there come any (including the cults)

unto you, (at your home, on the street, or in a church service)

and bring not this doctrine, (the doctrine of Christ--that *Jesus* is God, virgin born, crucified and risen Savior)

receive him not (don't invite him) *into your house*, (your home or church)

neither bid him God speed: (don't wish him well by saying, "the Lord be with you").

For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. " (guilty before God)

5. If a member of your family or close friend gets involved with cultic doctrine, pray earnestly for them, ask God to give you wisdom and opportunities to confront their wrong doctrines with Biblical truth. Remember they are watching your life to see if you live out the teachings of Christ. Be careful to maintain a kindly spirit even if you find yourself disputing doctrine. Like all unbelievers, they need to believe the gospel to be saved.

The Puzzle of Seventh-Day Adventism

PREFACE

In this brief course dealing with non-Christian cults, the question might be asked, "Why include Seventh-day Adventism, especially since many characterize them as a Christian denomination?" The answer to this is that for over a century Adventism has borne a stigma of being called a non-Christian cult system. Whether or not this was justified in the early development of Adventism, others have already discussed at length in other works, but it should be carefully remembered that the Adventism of 1995 is different in not a few places from the Adventism of 1845, and with that change the necessity of re-evaluation comes naturally.

It is our conviction that one cannot be a true Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Christian Scientist, Unitarian, Spiritist, etc., and be a Christian in the Biblical sense of the term, but it is perfectly possible to be a Seventh-day Adventist and be a true follower of Jesus Christ despite certain concepts which they believe and are included in this study.

Such Christian leaders as Louis T. Talbot, M. R. DeHaan, John R. Rice, Anthony A. Hoekema, J. K. Van Baalen, Herbert Bird and John R. Gerstner have taken the position that Adventism is in fact a cult system; whereas, the late Donald Grey Barnhouse, E. Schuyler English, the late Walter Martin, and quite a few others have concluded the opposite.

Since the opposing view has had wide circulation over a long period of time, we deemed it was necessary to include Seventh-day Adventism in this study of cults. But we also feel it necessary to include, as a proper counter-balance, the other side of the issue.

This, of course, is not to be construed in any sense of the term as an endorsement of the entire theological structure of Seventh-day Adventism, a portion of which is definitely out of the main stream of historic Christian theology. But we believe it is only fair and ethical to consider both sides of an extremely difficult and provocative controversy which shows very little sign of abating in our day.

This section on Seventh-day Adventism is an attempt to present for consideration facts which are little known in many areas and often distorted in others. It is an effort to examine, commend and criticize where necessary the theological structure of the Adventist denomination and is submitted with a prayerful hope that honest investigation, even if it does not agree with our preconceived notions, is to be encouraged and profited from under the guidance of the Spirit of God.

There is much in SDA that is praiseworthy.

(1) Seventh-Day Adventists are doing a great work for the improvement of public health, through their magazine *Life and Health*, their sanatoria, and their medical missions throughout the world.

(2) They maintain free Christian schools in which they educate their children all the way from the kindergarten through college.

(3) They maintain and teach many cardinal *Christian doctrines* that are foreign to the other cults dealt with in this course.

(4) They fight successfully for the sanctity of the home, the family, and marriage, and oppose worldliness in theater attendance, dancing, card-playing, and lodge membership.

(5) They put most, if not all, other Christians to shame by their very large per capita *financial* giving.

Furthermore:

- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists believe the Bible to be the Word of God
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists believe in the literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists believe in the premillennial, personal, and imminent return of Jesus Christ
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists do not deny the full deity of Jesus Christ
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists do not deny the doctrine of the Trinity.
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists affirm Christ's complete equality with the Father.
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists believe in the pre-existence of the Son of God from eternity.
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists accept the teaching of the personality of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ While there remains some ambiguity in their teachings on the Atonement, Seventh-day Adventists seem to maintain that the work of Christ on the cross was vicarious and substitutionary for all sinners.
- ◆ Seventh-day Adventists hold to a Sabbatarian view of worship. While we do not hold to this view, we must admit that they have a clear Biblical right to worship on the seventh day and to esteem the Sabbath as their holy day. (Rom. 14) They are to be commended for this diligent, and often persecuted, stand for what they believe to be the right and proper day of worship.

This should be enough to make the reader aware of the fact that Seventh-day Adventists are **very different** from all other groups considered in this course. Please keep this in mind as you read the section on Seventh-day Adventists.

Yet, it is true that Seventh-day Adventists have other strange teachings, such as the peculiar views they hold concerning:

- The Doctrine of Soul-sleep
- The Annihilation of the wicked.
- The Investigative Judgment
- The Condemnation of all who do NOT observe the Sabbath
- The Mark of the Beast
- The Scapegoat Teaching
- The Sabbath (beyond mere observance of a holy day, to the point of requiring it as a part of one's salvation)

It is our opinion that Seventh-day Adventists fail to view the Scriptures relating to these topics in the light of all other passages found in the Bible. But we prefer to pass by some of these things, and to give a brief history and evaluation of Seventh-day Adventists.

Group: SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

Date Founded: **1863**

Founder: **Ellen G. White (1827-1915)**

Name: The group's name is derived from their insistence that **Saturday**, as the *Sabbath*, the day of rest and worship instituted by God in the Old Testament Law, is the day Christians should set aside for worshipping God. The word **Adventism** in the group's name identifies their strong interest in Christ's Second Coming. Initials: SDA.

Headquarters: **Washington, D.C.**

History

Ellen G. White was born in Gorham, Maine. Her parents were expelled from the Methodist Church for holding to the teachings of William Miller, who set a tentative date for Christ's return as any time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When the event did not occur by the deadline, Miller's followers offered a new date. Later, some **Millerites** (name they were first called) decided Miller had predicted the wrong event but the right date. They said his predicted date applied to the beginning of *investigative judgment* in heaven, which would conclude at an undisclosed time at Christ's second coming. Ellen White claimed to receive revelations from God through visions or dreams which form the basis for the teachings of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. She became the group's prophetess and leader. Her husband was Elder James White.

Ellen White died in 1915, leaving a legacy of 53 books. In the early 1980s, a Seventh-Day Adventist pastor, Elder Walter Rea, spent two years researching her writings and concluded that every major work by her had a previously published source. This startled loyal followers, who had been taught her writings were inspired by God.

Promotional features

- SDA is highly promoted through extensive medical facilities around the world.
- Local SDA churches sponsor "Prophecy Lectures" and correspondence courses.
- In an effort to gain credibility into mainstream Christianity, the SDA in 1989 published and distributed free to clergymen the book, *Seventh-Day Adventists Believe--A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*. While portions of the book agree with Bible doctrine, other portions contradict Scripture.
- In their effort to be recognized as part of mainstream Christianity, they often conceal their name in their promotion and advertising, even to the point of being deceptive.
- They operate schools (through 8th grade) connected with their churches.

SDA doctrine

- Though Seventh-Day Adventists' beliefs are more similar to Bible beliefs than the other groups, there are significant differences. There appears to be a reliance on *salvation by works* (Sabbath keeping, not eating pork, etc.) rather than by faith alone. This seems to make them fit the definition of a cult.
- They strictly observe Saturday as the Sabbath for worship and rest. According to SDA, all who worship on Sunday are violating God's command. They claim God did not change the day of rest and worship from Saturday to Sunday, yet the New Testament records that, the church met on the first day of the week, the Lord's day (Sunday) not on the Sabbath (seventh day). The first day of the week is in remembrance of Christ's resurrection (Acts 20:7, I Cor.16:2, Rev.1:10). It is noteworthy that all of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament except "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:6).
- They insist on law-keeping as evidence of obedience to God, rigidly observing dietary laws that conform with the Old Testament law.
- The Investigative Judgment doctrine alleges that in 1844 Christ entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry and is examining the records of all who have believed on Him to determine which of them will be accepted and which of them will be rejected. Those who have sins unrepented of and unforgiven will be rejected; those who have repented and by faith have claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice and whose character is found to be in harmony with the Law of God (works) will be accepted and their sins will be blotted out. *Followers of SDA do not all agree on the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment, which Ellen White claimed to have received by divine revelation.*

However, many questions still remain concerning Seventh-day Adventists. We are not attempting to be unduly critical of Seventh-day Adventists, but we maintain their teaching is still on the outside fringe of historic Christianity and borders on being cultic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR EXPOSING THE CULTS

The false doctrines of cults need to be exposed so they will not entrap people. Christian bookstores usually have books and materials that expose the errors of cults. Libraries (particularly church libraries) should have similar books. The following books are especially helpful in exposing the cults.

GENERAL

- Concise Dictionary of Cults and Religions* by William Watson (Moody Press, 1991)
- The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1985)
- The Four Major Cults* by Anthony Hoekema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ., 1963)
- The Chaos of Cults* by J. K. Van Baalen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962.)
- Confronting the Cults* by Gordon R. Lewis (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publ., 1966)
- So What's the Difference* by Fritz Ridenour (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1967)
- Know the Marks of Cults* by Dave Breese (Wheaton, Illinois: SP Publications Inc., 1975)

MORMONISM

- Everything You Ever Wanted To Know About Mormonism* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publ., 1992)
- What You Need to Know about Mormons* by Ed Decker (Harvest House Publ., 1992) *Unmasking Mormonism.* by Ed Decker and Dave Hunt (Harvest House Publ., 1990)
- The God Makers* by Ed Decker and Dave Hunt (Harvest House Publ., 1984.) Also in film version, produced by Jeremiah films, Burbank, California. *Mormonism* by Salem Kirban (Moody Press, 1971)
- The Mormon Illusion* by Floyd C. McElveen (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1977)

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

- Adventism in America* by Gary Lewis (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986) *Seventh-Day Adventism* by Anthony Hoekema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ., 1974)
- The Bible, Christians, and Seventh-Day Adventism* by Gary Lewis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966)
- The Truth About Seventh-Day Adventism* by Walter Martin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1960)
- Seventh-Day Adventism Renounced* by D. M. Canright (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1889)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

- Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave* by W. J. Schnell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971)
- How to Answer a Jehovah's Witness* by Robert A. Morey (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1980)
- How to Witness to Jehovah's Witnesses* by William J. Schell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975)
- Jehovah's Witnesses* by Anthony Hoekema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963)

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

- Christian Science* by Salem Kirban (Huntingdon Valley, Pa.: Salem Kirban, 1974) *Christian Science* by Walter Martin (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1957)
- Christian Science* by Anthony Hoekema (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1963)
- A Way That Seemeth Right* by H. Martyn Hart (New York: James Pott & Co., 1897)
- The Antidote to Christian Science* by James M. Gray (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1907)

Questions

The term *cult* commonly applies to any false system of worship that:

1. arises within professed _____.
2. destroys or distorts _____ into a doctrine of _____.
3. detracts from or adds to the _____ as God's authoritative, _____ revelation
4. claims to be the purest form of _____ faith.
5. Cults are counterfeit church groups that go under the guise of Christianity.
6. List the following information on **four** major cults:

Cult Name

Date Founded

Founder

Information of their name

Location of their headquarters

7. Matching: (some answers may be used more than once)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| – Joseph Smith | A. Armstrongism |
| – Charles T. Russell | B. Seventh-Day Adventism |
| – Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy | C. Mormonism Founder |
| – Herbert W. Armstrong | D. Successor to Joseph Smith |
| – Charles and Myrtle Fillmore | E. Christian Science |
| – Brigham Young | F. Mormonism |
| – Polygamy | G. Jehovah's Witnesses |
| – Sabbath Observance | H. Unity School of Christianity |
| – Science and Health With Key To
The Scriptures | |
| – Ellen G. White | |

8. List four ways in which we should respond when encountering cult members.

9. Explain the phrases, and what they mean, in II John 10, 11

10. What should be our final authority when considering all matters of faith and practice?