

# World Religions, Cults, and Aberrant Beliefs

## Lesson 18 – Review

Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School

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### Introduction

All false philosophies (religious, psychological, etc.) are Satan's creation. Any distortion of the true gospel is the work of Satan whose aim is to deceive people into thinking that *THEY* are doing what is needed to be rewarded heaven upon death. This is salvation by works (doing "good" things and not doing "bad" things).

When studying the cults, we may be tempted to scoff at the seemingly ludicrous beliefs. We must remember that the average cultist that we will encounter is not a false teacher, but is deceived by Satan. This is someone that God loves; someone for whom Christ died.

<sup>8</sup>But **God demonstrates His own love toward us**, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Rom 5:8

<sup>4</sup>But when the kindness of God our Savior and **His love for mankind** appeared, Titus 3:4

<sup>16</sup>"For **God so loved the world**, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

Paul's example should be ours.

<sup>1</sup>I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, <sup>2</sup>that **I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart.** <sup>3</sup>**For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,** Rom 9:1-3

<sup>1</sup>**Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.** Rom 10:1

The non-Christian definition of a cult usually focuses on sociological, psychological, or behavioral factors. According to these factors, a cult is a religious group that seeks to control its members by either a single individual or the organization. The cult is manipulative and demands total commitment and loyalty of the followers. The standard evangelical definition of a Christian cult is any group that deviates from Biblical Christianity in fundamental doctrines of the faith. The important points to focus on in witnessing situations with adherents or cultists are: 1) the source of authority, 2) the nature of God including the Trinity, 3) the person and work of Christ, 4) the nature of man, and 5) the means of salvation.

Obviously, there are other areas of comparison in which world religions and cults are in error. However, these are secondary issues which fall into place if the first five are correct. In many cases, these groups may use the same words as true Christians, but radically redefine them.

### Status of World Religions and Cults

The number of adherents to the main world religions are declining or remaining stable. The exception is Islam which is experiencing growth due the high birth rate among third world countries and the intense cultural pressure to remain a Muslim.

Christian cults are experiencing growth. This should not be surprising as it is prophesied in 2 Timothy that such would occur.

<sup>3</sup>For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, **they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,** <sup>4</sup>and **will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.** 2 Tim 4:3-4

... One noted cult researcher observed that the cults are ‘the unpaid bills of the church.’ The church has failed to doctrinally train its members; it has failed to make a real moral difference in the lives of its members; it has failed to meet people’s deepest needs; and it has failed to provide people with a sense of belonging. The failure of the church is wide and deep, and this has made it easy for the cults to flourish.

... But, of course, the growth of the cults is attributable to many other factors as well. Among other things, the cults are multiplying because of the growth of relativism, selfism, subjectivism, and mysticism. Further, moral rebellion and the breakdown of families have contributed to the increase in cults worldwide. ...

... Indeed, if the Christian church were more zealous in true evangelism, the world would have less cultic proselytizing. ... All three quotes from Geisler, Norman L. and Rhodes, Ron, *Correcting the Cults – Expert Responses to Their Scripture Twisting*

Is this true? What about 2 Tim 4:3-4? What about God’s sovereignty?

<sup>2</sup>“I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Job 42:2

<sup>3</sup>But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. Psa 115:3

<sup>15</sup>For He says to Moses, “ I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION.” <sup>16</sup>So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. <sup>17</sup>For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “ FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.” <sup>18</sup>So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. Rom 9:15-18

<sup>4</sup>The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil. Prov 16:4

<sup>22</sup>What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? <sup>23</sup>And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, Rom 9:22-23

## **Comparison Points**

### Source of Authority

The Bible, composed of the 39 OT books and the 27 NT books, constitutes God’s only written revelation to mankind. It is the inspired, verbal (extending to the very words), plenary (including all of the words), infallible (trustworthy), inerrant in the original manuscripts Word of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20-21; Matt 5:18; 22:31-32; Gal 3:16). The Scriptures are authoritative and constitute the believer’s sole authority for faith and practice (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12; 2 Pet 1:20-21). Only Scripture is perfectly adequate for all matters of faith and conduct – for salvation *and* sanctification. It is all-sufficient in regards to the soul of man, in our relationship to God, and in our relationship to others. It is the supreme and final authority in all matters on which it speaks (2 Pet 1:3; Matt 4:4; Heb 4:12; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 1 Pet 2:2; Psa 19:7-13; 119:9, 11; 119:24).

### Nature of God

There is one God (Deut. 6:4). He is Creator and Lord of everything that exists (Gen 1-3). He is infinite (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:28), transcendent (yet personal), eternal (Gen 21:33; Psa 90:2), unchangeable (James 1:17), omnipresent (Psa 139:7-12), sovereign (Eph 1), omniscient (Matt 11:21), and omnipotent (Rev 19:6). He eternally exists as Triune God: three persons – Father (John 6:27, Eph 4:6), Son (Col 1:16-19; Heb 1:8), Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) – each equal; having the same attributes; and equally worthy of adoration, worship, and faith.

## Person and Work of Jesus

Jesus, the Christ, is the eternal, uncreated second person of the Trinity. He was eternally one with the Father and incarnated supernaturally (John 1:1-12; Matt 1:18-25). He is the eternal God-man. In the incarnation Jesus surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence (Phil 2:5-8; Col 1:16-19). Jesus' birth, sinless life, death, and resurrection are literal, historical events. Jesus willingly died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin (John 10:15; 3:16; Rom 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Pet 2:24). The resurrection of Jesus confirmed His deity and proved that God had accepted His atoning sacrifice (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Rom 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10). Jesus is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5) – the only way to the Father (means of salvation) (John 14:6).

## Nature of Man

God created mankind in His image and likeness – sinless, with intelligence, self-consciousness, and self-determination (Gen 2:7; 15-25; 1 Cor 11:7; James 3:9). By their free will, mankind chose to sin against God and are therefore under the condemnation of physical and spiritual death (eternal separation from their creator) (Gen 3; Rom 3:23; Isa 59:1-2). The corruption of sin extends to every aspect of our being (Rom 1:18-3:20) including intellect (2 Cor 4:4), conscience (1 Tim 4:2), will (Rom 1:28), and heart (Eph 4:18). All people are therefore unable to enter into a personal relationship with God on their own initiative (Rom 3:23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3).

## Means of Salvation

Salvation is the work of God whereby he saves individuals from the penalty, power, and one day the very presence of sin. It is completely by God and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19). Forgiveness of sins (Col 2:13-14) is a free gift (Eph 2:8-9) that is given to those that repent from their sins (Heb 6:1) and exercise faith (John 3:16) in Jesus as Lord and Savior. No pre-forgiveness work is required (i.e. baptism, good deeds, obeying commandments, going to church, giving money, praying, doing penance, surrendering to an organization, etc.). The Scriptures declare that nothing can separate the believer from the Christ (Rom 8:28-39). All true believers once saved are kept by God's power and are always saved (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Eph 4:30; Heb 7:25; 13:5; 1 Pet 1:5; Jude 24). When a professor of Christ turns away it shows that true salvation never took place (1 John 2:19).

## Dealing with Adherents and Cultists

A key passage to understand when dealing with religious adherents and cultists is 1 Pet 3:15.

<sup>15</sup>but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 1 Pet 3:15

The believer submits to Christ as Lord of their life. At any moment we should be ready (prepared) to make a defense (a reasoned statement or argument). Believers should be able to give a rational explanation of their salvation and Christian faith. The defense must be with humility and respect. Other passages speak to not being quarrelsome (2 Tim 2:24-26) and to sharing truth in love (Eph 4:14-15).

<sup>24</sup>The Lord's bond-servant **must not be quarrelsome**, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup>with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. 2 Tim 2:24-26

<sup>14</sup>As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; <sup>15</sup>but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ, Eph 4:14-15

## Practical List

1. Yield your heart to Jesus. Sanctify your heart (1 Pet 3:15).  
<sup>15</sup>but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; 1 Pet 3:15
2. Pray. This is not a battle of wits or a debate of words. This is a spiritual battle for the truth.  
<sup>3</sup>For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. <sup>5</sup>*We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor 10:3-5
3. Be ready with a good understanding of the Scriptures. The cultist you generally run across will know the Bible well. However, the cultist will generally use the bible out of context or interpret it based on some other authority from within the cult. You may want to ask the cultist to read the passages out loud themselves to show the context.
4. Do not argue, attack the person, nor ridicule the cultist or the cult's founder (2 Tim 2:24-26).  
<sup>24</sup>The Lord's bond-servant **must not be quarrelsome**, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup>with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will. 2 Tim 2:24-26
5. Make sure you define words. Even "God" and "Jesus" need to be defined to clarify differences with the cultist.
6. Do not get off on tangents. The important points are the source of authority, the nature of God, the person and work of Jesus, the nature of man, and the means of salvation.
7. Avoid Christian jargon – it has no meaning for the unchurched.
8. Avoid offensive language – the gospel can be taken as offensive by the unredeemed, there is no need to place an additional stumbling block before someone
9. Extend yourself in love to your non-Christian friend. Show them the difference in the lives of the redeemed.
10. Share your testimony and your assurance of eternal life through Christ.

## Judaism

To begin our study of Judaism, noted that God did not provide all information about Himself at a single time, but progressively added more revelation concerning Himself and His plan. Therefore, Jewish people worship an incomplete revelation of the God of the Bible. The basic point to understand when sharing with Jewish people is that we are not wanting them to abandon their Jewishness. Our desire is for them to come to a saving relationship with their Creator through Jesus Christ.

## **Islam**

### Source of Authority

The Qur'an is the only source of uncorrupted authority. The Torah, Psalms of David, and the Gospels of Jesus are Scripture, but have been corrupted.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

God is absolute unity (one person in one nature) and is unknowable.

### Person and Work of Jesus

Jesus was merely a prophet. He did not die on a cross and He did not rise from the dead.

### Nature of Man

People are good by nature.

### Means of Salvation

Salvation is by works – through a good life and accomplishing the five pillars of Islam.

## **Hinduism**

### Source of Authority

A host of sacred writings are the authority for Hinduism

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

God is an impersonal ultimate reality or "The absolute" major triad: Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu.

### Person and Work of Jesus

For some Hindus, Jesus was an Avatar or incarnation of god – one among many Avatars. He was a great spiritual teacher, a guru whose teachings can be valuable today.

### Nature of Man

The present existence is an illusion. Man's divine eternal soul is part of god. People are unaware of their oneness with god. The physical body has little worth. The human condition is the endless cycle of reincarnation.

### Means of Salvation

The goal of life is to gain release (liberation) from the cycle of reincarnation; to pass beyond illusion to become one with the divine (ultimate reality) by following the proper yoga (path or discipline).

## **Buddhism**

### Source of Authority

The writings of Buddha and other Buddhist teachers are the authority for Buddhism.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

For Southern Buddhism the term is irrelevant because they do not believe in a god. For Northern Buddhism "god" is Buddhahood.

### Person and Work of Jesus

A teacher who possessed Buddhahood (enlightenment). He was one among many, and not unique. He was a great religious teacher whose teachings can be valuable today.

### Nature of Man

There is one lifetime for each person, composed of skanda (parts), but many lives for the parts. The human condition is suffering caused by attachment to things and the craving (desire) accompanying this attachment.

### Means of Salvation

The goal of life is nirvana (negation of suffering) to eliminate all desire, particularly by following the Eightfold Path.

## **The New Age Movement (NAM)**

### Source of Authority

There is no objective source of authority. The sacred writings and devotional material from many traditions have spiritual value.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

God (ultimate reality) is an impersonal power, often spoken of as energy, consciousness, mind, or truth. God is everything; everything is god.

### Person and Work of Jesus

Jesus was one of many appearances of god throughout the ages, one of many people who were fully aware of their true divinity. Christ is separate from Jesus, the way-shower. Christ is the perfect god idea – the awareness of divinity within each person.

### Nature of Man

Humanity is not distinct from god. Human beings are essentially divine; god is within each person. Everyone has the "Christ spirit", everyone is potentially good. The human problem is illusion, ignorance, or lack of perception. People are unaware of their true identity as divine, as one with god. They need to be "enlightened" to find ultimate spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of reincarnation.

### Means of Salvation

People overcome lack of perception by using techniques to change (transform) their consciousness. They can attain enlightenment by stepping outside ordinary modes of perception into altered states of consciousness that dispel illusory boundaries of individual existence. Souls are evolving toward union with god and will eventually find spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

## **Catholicism**

### Source of Authority

According to Roman Catholic Church (RCC) teaching, the source of authority does not rest with Scripture alone, but with Scripture, tradition, and the Pope – each with equal authority.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

The RCC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of God, including the Trinity.

### Person and Work of Jesus

The RCC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

### Nature of Man

The RCC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on nature of man. However, the RCC distinguishes between two types of sin: mortal and venial. A mortal sin is serious or "grave" (murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, etc.) and is committed with "full knowledge and complete consent". After committing a mortal sin a person is unsaved until accomplishing the sacrament of reconciliation which reconciles one with God and obtains "forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism". A venial sin is either not serious or grave or does not involve full knowledge or complete consent. Venial sin does not destroy the saving grace of God in the individual.

### Means of Salvation

Salvation in RCC theology is not by grace through faith but a complex adherence to sacraments and rituals as legislated by the church hierarchy. Catholics believe they are saved by doing good, confessing sin, and observing ceremonies.

## Mormonism

### Source of Authority

Mormons accept four books as scripture. Mormons believe that the canon of Scripture was not closed when the Bible was completed. They believe that the Bible is the word of God, but deny that it has been translated correctly and believe it has been corrupted since the days of the apostles. In addition to the Bible, Mormons believe that the Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price all contain god's revelation. Whenever a Mormon belief contradicts the Bible, Mormons say that particular part of the Bible is translated incorrectly, and that the correct doctrine is in one of the Mormon scriptures. Thereby, the Bible is rejected as the infallible Word of God.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

Essentially, Mormonism is a man-exalting, God-humanizing religion. Mormonism teaches that god the father is a resurrected, "exalted" human being named Elohim who at one time was not a god. Rather, he was once a mortal man on another planet who, through obedience to the precepts of his god, eventually attained exaltation, or godhood, himself. The Mormon god, is located in time and space, has a body of flesh and bone and thus is neither spirit nor omnipresent. Mormonism teaches that god increases in knowledge and, consequently, god does not have absolute and total knowledge. Mormonism also teaches that the god over this world is one in an infinite lineage of gods. In the Mormon universe, god is not responsible for creating or sustaining matter, energy, natural laws, human personhood, moral principles, nor the process of salvation (or exaltation). In fact, instead of the universe being subject to him (which is the biblical view), the Mormon god is subject to the universe. All that the Bible says about the true God, the Mormon god is not.

### Person and Work of Jesus

Mormons believe that Jesus is *a* god and that Lucifer, the demons, and all mankind are spirit brothers and sisters, born in the spirit world as spirit babies to Elohim and his goddess wives. Mormon leaders have consistently taught that god the father had sexual relations on earth with Mary (his own spirit daughter), to produce the physical body of Jesus. Early Mormon apostles also asserted that Jesus was a polygamist, and that His wives included Mary and Martha (the sisters of Lazarus) and Mary Magdalene. In the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as on the cross, Jesus atoned for Adam's sin and guaranteed all mankind resurrection and immortality. Jesus visited the Israelites or Indians of North America after his resurrection and established the true church among them.

### Nature of Man

Mormonism claims that humans preexisted as spirit children in heaven, who are later given bodies to live on earth so that they may progress to godhead. Mormonism teaches that preexistent humans made choices as spirit children that determined whether or not they would come to earth. Those who were obedient, received physical bodies. Mormonism teaches that humans can become gods through obedience to Mormon teaching and obeying the Church and the Prophet.

### Means of Salvation

Mormon theology teaches that the atonement of Christ was essential to our salvation and eternal life with god, but that it is not sufficient. Christ's shed blood on the cross provides for universal resurrection of all people, but does not pay for personal sins. Only the most faithful Mormons have godhood or enter the celestial kingdom. In order to obtain this ultimate step, Mormons must exercise faith in the god of Mormonism, its Christ, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; exercise repentance; and be baptized in the LDS Church. Additionally, Mormons must keep the "Word of Wisdom" by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine; tithe to the church; attend weekly sacrament meetings; support the Mormon prophet; do temple works; and be active in their support of the church. Mormonism also teaches that one must be baptized in water to be saved, and that salvation will also be available in the next world for those "missing-out" in this one. Therefore, Mormons avidly pursue genealogy and practice baptism for the dead.

## **Jehovah's Witnesses**

### **Source of Authority**

The Jehovah Witnesses view the Bible as the divinely inspired and infallible Word of God. They use the "New World Translation" (NWT) of the Scriptures. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is regarded as Jehovah God's only channel of accurate biblical interpretation in the world today. Jehovah Witnesses believe there is no salvation apart from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

### **Nature of God Including the Trinity**

Jehovah Witnesses believe the true god is named Jehovah. One God, properly called Jehovah. He is a spirit-being, invisible and eternal, but has a spiritual body and is not omnipresent. The doctrine of the Trinity is rejected. His Holy Spirit is an impersonal force.

### **The Person and Work of Jesus**

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is God's only direct creation, that everything else was created by means of Christ, and that the initial unassisted act of creation uniquely identifies Jesus as God's "only-begotten Son". They believe that Jesus is a created being with stages of existence: 1) Archangel Michael or the Word; 2) Jesus, perfect man, became Messiah at his baptism; and 3) after his spiritual resurrection, became Michael again but retains the name Jesus. They believe that references in the Bible to the Archangel Michael, Apollyon, and the Word all refer to Jesus. Jesus served as a redeemer and a ransom sacrifice to pay for the sins of mankind. They believe Jesus died on a single upright torture stake rather than a cross. Jesus is considered to be the only intercessor and high priest between God and mankind, and appointed by God as the king and judge of his kingdom.

### **Nature of Man**

Jehovah Witnesses believe that the spirit, or life-force, that God gives at our birth departs at death. There is no conscious existence at death. They believe that there is no consciousness after death.

### **Means of Salvation**

Salvation is obtained from allegiance to Jehovah plus works (baptism by emersion; active association with the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society; faithfulness in Kingdom Hall work; and righteous conduct). There is no assurance of salvation, only hope for a resurrection. Those who fail to live up to the requirements for salvation or who are disfellowshipped by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society have no hope of salvation. Those who have disobeyed Jehovah and his law will be annihilated out of existence with Satan and his demons. This is the "second death." The doctrine of eternal hell is regarded as unscriptural, unreasonable, contrary to God's love, and unjust.

## **The International Church of Christ (ICOC or ICC)**

### **Source of Authority**

The ICOC believes that the Bible is the inspired word of God and the ultimate source of authority. However, their specific interpretations are considered correct over other interpretations.

### **Nature of God Including the Trinity**

The ICOC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of God, including the Trinity.

### **Person and Work of Jesus**

The ICOC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

### **Nature of man**

The ICOC agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of man.

### **Means of salvation**

The ICOC believes that only it is the true Church – the only vehicle to proclaim the gospel on earth. In the ICOC gospel, salvation is not free, but requires baptism. In addition, the ICOC convert must be baptized in an ICOC church with the knowledge that that baptism saves them. The ICOC is a cult based on the theological definition because of this departure from Biblical Christianity.



## **Freemasonry**

### Source of Authority

While the Bible may be freely quoted in some Lodges, for the Mason, the sources of authority are the Masonic Rituals, the Grand Lodges, and prominent Masonic authorities and writers. In Freemasonry, the Masonic authorities supersede the Bible.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

For the individual Mason, they may believe in any god that they choose. However, the Masonic name for god is the “Great Architect of the Universe” or “G.A.O.T.U.”. As the Mason progresses through the degrees he is taught that the most significant secret in Masonry is god’s name and the true name for god is “Jabulon”. This name conveys the Masonic view that all religions have the same idea of the deity. Masonry teaches that god created the universe but is not currently active in either mercy or in judgment. Therefore, he cannot be known personally or by revelation but only generally through reason. Jesus Christ and the Bible, therefore, are not revelations of god.

### Person and Work of Jesus

For the Mason, Jesus was a good man who understood divine (Masonic) truth. Additionally, the Mason believes that there are many ways to God.

### Nature of man

According to Masons, humans are flawed, but not depraved. All non-Masons exist in spiritual darkness. Humans are able to improve their behavior and character and each individual must be educated to reach this perfection. Freemasonry provides the means by which one can attain salvation. Humans are not in the need of someone to make atonement for their sins. Humans are capable of doing all that is needed for their salvation, through Masonry.

### Means of salvation

Masonry teaches a works salvation which is opposed to the Biblical plan of salvation of grace through faith in Jesus.

## **The Church of Christ, Scientist (Also known as The Christian Science Church)**

### Source of Authority

Mary Baker Eddy maintained that “as adherents of Truth, we take the inspired Word of the Bible as our sufficient guide to eternal Life”. However, Eddy questioned the textual reliability of the Bible. In addition, Christian Scientists interpret the Bible in a radical way according to their metaphysical presuppositions – eliminating any semblance of historical Christianity. Eddy ascribes arbitrary spiritual meaning to biblical terms.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

To the Christian Scientist, God (the Father-Mother) is a Principle known as the Divine Mind. It has no personhood and no personality. A catch phrase used in their literature is that God is "All in All." In other words, God is all that exists and what we perceive as matter is an interpretation of divine mind. Since God is love, it means that sin and sickness are only errors of interpreting the Divine Mind and have no true reality. Since God’s essential essence is spirit or mind, and only that which reflects His nature is real, then matter does not really exist.

### Person and Work of Jesus

To the Christian Scientist, Jesus is a Way-shower. He is someone who epitomized the true principle of the Christ Consciousness which indwells us all. Therefore, Jesus did not really die on the cross. He was not God in flesh. He made no atonement in shedding His blood. There is an essential difference between Jesus the man and the “Christ Principle” which came upon Him as He comprehended it.

## Nature of Man

In Christian Science, matter does not exist. The body is not real. It is an illusion of the "mortal mind" of man. Man originally existed with God and is an expression of the Divine Principle (of God). Since only those ideas that reflect God's nature actually are real, then sin, death, disease, and pain are not real, but only illusions. To the Christian Scientist, there is no sin. Since God and man are immortal spirit or mind, death is also only an illusion. It is a transition from the illusion of the material to ultimate reality of immortal spirit.

## Means of Salvation

Since sin does not exist, then salvation has no purpose and also does not exist. To achieve "salvation," the Christian Scientist needs only to find the true reality of understanding, as revealed in Christian Science teachings. Since sin and death are false beliefs (illusions), salvation involves overcoming the false idea that they exist with a realization of our divine spirit and mind.

## Scientology

### Source of Authority

For the Scientologist, the sources of authority are the writings and speeches of L. Ron Hubbard. Of special importance is his book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. Scientology continued on after Hubbard's death and now is publishing new materials and producing educational/promotional material.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

The Church of Scientology International has no clear definition of the nature or person of God. References to a Supreme Being are rare in Scientology literature. The Supreme Being is defined in vague, pantheistic terms as embracing the "allness of all." All that exists is a manifestation of the universal spirit, which is all that actually exists.

### Person and Work of Jesus

Scientology denies the deity of Christ. He is assigned the characteristics of some sort of lesser god who has obtained a sort of legendary status over the years.

### Nature of Man

People are immortal, divine beings. They are composed of three dimensions: soul (thetan), mind (an accumulation of all past experiences in this and past lives), and body (the physical component). Engrams are stored in one's "reactive mind" and learned from one's past lives, prenatal experience, and early childhood. These prevent individuals from realizing their innate divinity and experiencing a happy, fulfilled life using their analytical minds. 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.

### Means of 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. Engrams are removed from the mind only by an expensive process of dianetic counseling. This process, called "auditing," involves the utilization of an "E-meter" that supposedly indicates when a person has discovered an engram and helps the client expunge it from his or her unconscious reactive mind in order to achieve "Clear." The path to salvation, "enlightenment", includes achieving states of increasingly greater mental awareness – Pre-Clear, Clear, and ultimately Operating Thetan. An Operating Thetan is a spirit who can control matter, energy, space, time, thought, and life. A person who has attained Clear may need further auditing to remove engrams held over from previous lives. A person will experience many thetan reincarnations in many lives over thousands of years. (Thus, auditing often must include clearing the client of engrams from past lives.) Eventually, the thetan can liberate itself completely from matter, energy, space, & time (MEST) and attain total spiritual awareness and become one with infinity.

## **The Occult**

It is clear from Scripture that that overt involvement in the occult is against the will of God. The prohibition found in Deut 18:9 given to Israel, but the principle is applicable to Christians as well, is to “not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations.”

## **Seventh Day Adventism**

### **Source of Authority**

The SDA believes that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God. However, the official church position of the SDA is that Ellen White performed the work of a true prophet during the seventy years of her public ministry. In 1980, Walter Rea, a SDA minister announced research showing that Ellen White plagiarized nearly 90% of her writings. Because of this, some modern SDA leaders tend to water down the SDA’s official stance of viewing White as a prophet.

### **Nature of God Including the Trinity**

The early writings of Ellen White are ambiguous regarding the Trinity, but current official SDA teaching agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of God, including the doctrine of the Trinity.

### **Person and Work of Jesus**

While many SDA teachings on Christ are orthodox, some are not. The SDA believes that Jesus is God and has always existed with the Father, His sacrifice was vicarious, He rose from the dead physically in his glorified body, and He ascended bodily into heaven. Ellen White taught that the angel Michael was pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus. The SDA is quick to point out that they do not believe Jesus is any kind of an angel. Since Michael is called an "Archangel", they interpret this to mean that Jesus is "Chief over the angels," while still being God. Ellen White taught that: "Christ took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature ... Christ took human nature and bore the infirmities and degeneracy of the race. He took our nature and its deteriorating condition". According to SDA, then, Christ acquired a sinful nature.

### **Nature of Man**

The SDA mostly agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity on the nature of man. They teach that the universe was created in six literal days, people are created in God’s image and likeness, people fell into sin by their own choice, and now share a fallen nature and its consequences. However, the SDA believes in soul sleep and denies the immortality of the soul.

### **Means of Salvation**

The SDA Church teaches that Christianity in its original form was corrupted in the centuries after the New Testament era by apostate Roman Catholic popes. The sign of this apostasy was the shifting of the Sabbath day from the seventh to the first day of the week. Throughout history, a small, faithful group of Christians has maintained true worship. The SDA believes that it is the “remnant” church. According to the SDA, anyone who is a supposed believer is to be under strict adherence to OT law, including the Ten Commandments. The SDA publicly states its belief that salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. However, SDA teaching often implies that certain outward acts of righteousness are necessary to maintain one’s assurance of salvation, especially observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. SDA members also are expected to observe strict dietary regulations and to abstain from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco.

## **Oneness Pentecostalism**

### **Source of Authority**

The Oneness Pentecostalism believes that the Bible is the inspired word of God and the ultimate source of authority. However, their specific interpretations are considered correct over other interpretations.

### Nature of God Including the Trinity

Oneness Pentecostal theology affirms that there exists only one God. It affirms the deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. However, Oneness theology denies the Trinity and teaches that God is a single person who revealed himself in three separate appearances: as Father in the OT, as the Son in Jesus during Christ's ministry on earth, and now as the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension.

### Person and Work of Jesus

Oneness Pentecostals agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity that Jesus was born of a virgin and that He had two natures. However, they deny the doctrine of the Trinity and believe that Jesus is God the Father, Jesus is the Holy Spirit, and the name of God is "Jesus." They also deny the pre-existence of the Word as the Son and teach that He existed as the Father.

### Nature of Man

Oneness Pentecostals are Arminian in soteriology. They believe that man inherited weakness from Adam and although is far removed from perfect righteousness is still free to do spiritual good.

### Means of Salvation

Oneness Pentecostals agrees with historical, Biblical Christianity that through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sins can be forgiven and humanity reconciled with God. However, Oneness Pentecostals add to the saving work of Christ works needed for salvation. Oneness theology also maintains that baptism is a necessary part of salvation; that is, in order to be saved, one must be baptized, by immersion. Not only must baptism be by immersion, it must also be administered with the formula "In Jesus' name" rather than the formula "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit". Finally, this baptism must be administered by a duly ordained minister of a church that maintains oneness theology. Oneness churches also teach that speaking in tongues is a necessary manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Since a person cannot be saved without the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), it follows that only those who have spoken in tongues are really saved. Oneness groups are decidedly Arminian in the doctrine of salvation. They deny the total depravity of man and the sovereignty of God and believe that man can choose to believe in God on his own free will, God's call in the heart of a sinner can be rejected, and salvation can be lost.

### Arminianism

The errant theology of Arminianism was put forward in five points:

1. Free Will or Human Ability: Man inherited weakness from Adam and although is far removed from perfect righteousness is still free to do spiritual good.
2. Conditional Election: God looked forward and saw those that would choose Him then elected those that He saw would want to be saved of their own free will.
3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement: The atonement of Christ is intended for everyone and is applied by the power of the Holy Spirit in response to the will of the sinner.
4. Resistible Grace: The Holy Spirit can be effectually resisted and His purposes frustrated and cannot impart life unless the sinner is willing to have this life imparted.
5. Falling From Grace: Perseverance is dependent on obedience. A saved man can fall from salvation – if man takes the initiative in salvation, he retains responsibility for the final outcome.

In essence, Arminians maintained that God gives indispensable help in salvation, but that ultimately it is the free will of man which decides the issue. According to Arminianism, salvation is accomplished through the combined efforts of God (who takes the initiative) and man (who must respond); man's response being the determining factor. God has provided salvation for everyone, but His provision becomes effective only for those who, of their own free will, choose to cooperate with Him and accept His offer of grace. At the crucial point, man's will plays a decisive role; thus man, not God, determines who will be recipients of the gift of salvation. **THIS IS FALSE TEACHING.**

## **Spiritual Sign Gifts**

The Scriptures indicate that the sign gifts were related to the founding of the church. The purpose of sign gifts (healing, miracles/powers, tongues/languages, interpretation of tongues, revelatory word of knowledge, and revelatory prophecy) was to confirm the apostle's message (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4). With the NT complete, there was no need to confirm the message that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). The Scriptures teach in 1 Cor 13:8-13 that the sign gifts ended with the completion of Biblical revelation; with the completion of the canon of Scripture. Therefore, the sign gifts are not active today.

## **Deliverance Theology**

The issue with Deliverance Theology is that the "rescue from bondage" is primarily applied to rescue from demonization. This theology essentially attributes sin, difficulty, and sickness to demonic activity from which the believer must be delivered. It teaches that Christians can be demonized. This demonization can arise from traumas, rejection, abuse, and violence, but especially from habitual sin, in particular sins involving the occult. Extremists believe that certain sins or occult behavior in one's ancestors will cause demonic problems throughout generations until expelled. Some attribute every accident, misfortune, quarrel, sickness, disease and unhappiness to the direct work of demons. Some of the errant deliverance teachings are that Christians can cast out demons today, that Christians can bind Satan today, that Christians should rebuke the devil, that Christians can inherit demons through our ancestors, that Christians can inherit demons through inanimate objects, that demons necessarily cause us to sin or come as a result of sin, that Christians can defeat territorial spirits, and that the wording of a specific prayer is necessary for spiritual warfare.

How should we respond in spiritual warfare? The NT does not encourage mystical formulas or instruct us to say the right words to Satan. The equipment for spiritual warfare is available to every Christian, for it is the basic Christian life of knowing and prayerfully applying the truth of God's Word (Eph 6:13-18). By submitting to God, we resist the devil and stand firm in our faith (James 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9). In the practice of knowing and yielding to the revealed will of God in the Scripture, the devil will flee from us.

## **King James Onlyism**

While the KJV is a solid word-for-word Bible translation, it suffers from two significant weaknesses. First, its style and vocabulary has become difficult for modern readers as the English language has changed over the past 400 years. Second, its translation was based on a few manuscripts rather than the thousands that we now possess. While the methodology of the translators was similar to what is used today, they simply did not have the oldest and best manuscripts available to them. While no doctrinal issues were affected by the limitation of the KJV, even the translators themselves understood that their work could be improved upon as time moved along.

Even if the KJV is preferred, it is wrong to condemn all modern versions as corrupt because they deviate from the KJV. It is also wrong to attack those men who have served the church in providing more current translations that assist in understanding the Bible. While we do not defend all modern translations or translators, the issue is simply how faithful a translation is to the original text, not whether it differs from the KJV. It is also wrong to judge believers who use translations other than the KJV.