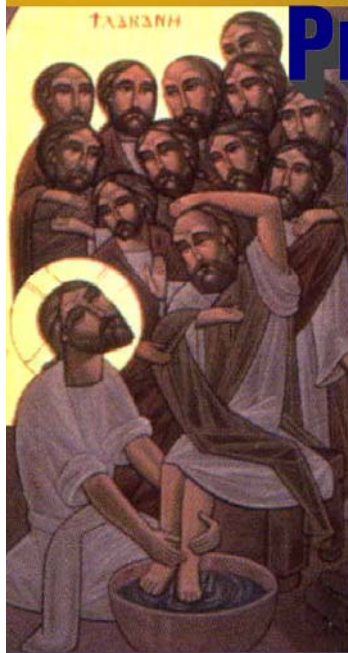




Servants' Preparation Program



Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the
Southern
United States

*"For I have given you an example,
that you should do as I have done to you"*
John 13:15

Coptic Orthodox
Diocese of the Southern United States

CPT 101
WORLD RELIGIONS AND CULTS

Servants' Preparation Program

2004

High School Boys (July 4 – 8)
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Atlanta, GA

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Lecture 1: Introduction

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)

The Truth

In a discussion between a Christian and non-Christian religious leader, the non-Christian leader said, “God is the super power controlling the universe. Our aim as humans is to reach this power and be united with it. There are several paths one may take to reach God. Christianity is one of them, but it is not the only path.” “I am not interested in such a god!” said the Christian leader. Can God accept opposite versions of the truth? Can God in one religion accept those who proclaim Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ as God, and the same God accept those who proclaim Him as a prophet? Would that make God honest, just and full of truth?

This course is not to discuss the absolute truth from a philosophical approach, but it is to help the servants understand the basics of the Christian faith and how it is altered in various other religions and cults. To achieve this goal, we Christians need to know the truth. Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

Knowing Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ leads us to know the truth, and the truth will set us free.

The Existence of God

First of all God is the super power who created heaven and earth. Can this huge creation be the result of an accident? Can the sun rises everyday at a specific time on its own, lest a disaster take place? Can the stars and the planets move in their orbits without a control unit, lest any deviation may destroy the universe? Can the members of a living creature function together in such a wondrous way without a super designer? Yes, God do exist, and He is in charge of the universe “The Pantocrator”. Why can’t we see God? Because God is a Spirit, and we cannot see spirits unless they reveal themselves to us in different ways.

God is Full of Goodness

Can this super power we call God be of evil nature? Let us look at the universe around us. The best answer to this question is expressed by St. Gregory in his liturgy “Because of the multitude of Your tender mercies, You have brought me into existence when I was not. You have raised heaven as a roof for me, and established the earth for me to walk upon. For my sake, You have bound the sea. For my sake, You have manifested the nature of animals. You have subjected all things under my feet. You have not left me in need of any of the works of Your honor. You are He who formed me, and laid Your hand upon me, and inscribed in me the image of Your authority. You have placed in me the gift of speech, and opened for me paradise to enjoy, and have given to me the learning of Your knowledge”. No, evil nature cannot be in this God. He is full of goodness and love.

From Where Did Evil Come?

If God has no evil nature in Him, where does the evil around us come from? God is light, and evil is darkness, and there is no partnership between light and darkness “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14) To explain the existence of evil, we note the other spiritual creatures, we call angels. They are spirits created by God to do some specific tasks according to God’s wisdom. They have been entrusted with great power, but a fraction of God’s power. They are limited, while God is infinite. Since they have the spiritual image of God, they were given the free will to make the right choice. Satan, the most powerful archangel, chose to take God’s place. This rebellious thought corrupted his spiritual being. He became evil by separating himself from the light of God. It was not Satan alone, but he was accompanied by those angels who took his side, estimated as one third of all angels. No question, such behavior has been a cause of sadness. The existence of angels and evil spirits has been experienced by human over the ages, and they have manifested themselves to man over and over again.

The Creation of Man

In the midst of this fall of Satan, God created man weaker than angels, but with opportunity to take the places vacant by the fall of Satan and his hosts. Man has a spiritual nature as God, but confined into a flesh made out of earthly matter. The spiritual nature, as in the case of angels, requires the free will. Man is weaker than angels because of the mortal flesh, which depends on the fruits of the earth to be sustained, while his spirit is immortal like God. With our limited mind, we may think, so to speak, that we are created to teach Satan a lesson, as well as to fill the vacancies resulting from his fall. The lesson is to show Satan the importance of submitting the free will to its source, God Himself. By doing so man, the weaker creation, can achieve what Satan could not achieve when he separated himself from God.

From the first day of Adam’s creation, Satan is his enemy. Satan, out of his corrupted nature, wants to corrupt every other nature.

The Fall of Man

Angels, being spiritual creatures, were given the freedom to choose between serving God or rebelling against Him. Man, being a combination of spirit and flesh, was given the freedom to obey or disobey God. The flesh needs the fruits of the earth to be sustained. The test given to man was to fast from a certain fruit. While eating was a requirement for the flesh to live, eating from this particular tree would result in death to man. Satan was able to deceive man by the same sin he had. He managed to convince man that by eating from this tree, man will be like God. By eating, death came upon man. No matter how much man may eat to live, the flesh will die. The spirit has been separated from God, declaring the spiritual death of man. Thus human has failed and their nature was corrupted too.

The Salvation of Man

St. Athanasius, the 20th Pope of Alexandria, argues that the fall of man, in a way, is a defeat of God’s power and absolute authority on the universe. Salvation of man was

necessary to ascertain the supremacy of God. The second hypostasis of God, the Logos, by whom everything was made, must restore His creature through an act of salvation. Since the fall of man brought death, a ransom must die to save man from death. Since the wage of sin is death, then every sinner cannot be redeemed except by the death of a sinless man. The Savior then must be sinless man unlimited within Himself in order to redeem every sinner. The condition that the savior must be a man requires that the Savior will be born from humans. The fact that He must be sinless (lest His death pay for His own sins) requires that the savior be born from a virgin without inheriting the corrupted nature. The ability to redeem every man requires that the Savior to be unlimited which means God Himself. Thus, the only way to redeem man was for God, the Logos, being infinite, incarnate (become man) from a virgin (He is sinless) and die to lift up the death sentence from humankind. Salvation requires not only the redemption, but also restoration from the corrupted nature (Baptism). The divine wisdom is to teach Satan a lesson of submission to God by the free will. This requires man to abide in God and God abide in him (Confirmation). The new life after redemption requires the continuous renewal (Repentance and Confession). Furthermore, the continuity of the new life requires the spiritual food (The Eucharist). Thus, the coming of Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ to earth was to achieve two things, paying the price to the divine justice, and to establish the structure for new life after salvation (The Church).

To achieve this goal, God had to deal with man step by step in order to elevate his mind to understand the value of his salvation, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation" (Hebrews 2:3). Thus, God was so patient with man. He led him through the prophets, until man was able to accept an organized religion (Judaism), which leads to the final truth (Christianity). In the following lectures, we will examine the method God adopted to restore man, and how Satan continue to fight back to alter the plan of God in the mind of man.

Lecture 2: Judaism

Introduction

After the fall of man and the corruption of his nature, the Old Testament tells us about how Cain the son of Adam killed his brother Abel. In other words, man's nature deteriorated very quickly from bad to worst. By the time of Noah, his family was the only family still worshipping God. Everybody else went astray to the extent God destroyed all by the flood except Noah's family.

In order not to destroy everything again, and to fulfill God's promise of salvation, God set aside a certain nation from which the Savior is to be born. The story starts by God entering into a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:5-15). If Abraham and his descendent worship God, they will be given a Promised Land and they will be a great nation. Abraham could not wait for the promise to be fulfilled; he had a child, Ishmael, from his slave Hagar. God told Abraham that the promise is through Sarah's offspring. The promised son, Isaac was born and God tested Abraham's faith this time by asking him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham learned his lesson and his trust in God increased and willingly went to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. God saved Isaac by giving Abraham a ram as animal sacrifice to substitute for his son and praised his faith. Similarly, Isaac has two sons Esau and Jacob. Esau lost his firstborn right to his brother Jacob and Jacob deceived his old aged father and stole his brother's blessing.

Jacob begot twelve sons and due to his favoritism towards his son Joseph, Joseph's brother sold him to the Ishmaelites who took him to the land of Egypt as a slave. When famine struck in the land of Canaan Jacob sent his sons to buy grain from Egypt. There Joseph who was now high ranked in the court of Pharaoh recognized his brother and forgave them for what they did to him. He asked to bring his father and the rest of his family to live in Egypt. Those children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land of Egypt was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph and who dealt shrewdly with the Israelites.

The Exodus

The most important event in Judaism is the Exodus. God promised Abraham that a great nation would arise from his seed that this nation would have a homeland (Canaan) and that the entire world would be blessed by this nation.

The book of Exodus opens with the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites crying out for deliverance from their enslavement by the Egyptians. The key figure in God's plan is Moses. Moses was endangered as an infant by the forces of evil and was miraculously delivered. He was rescued and reared by the daughter of the pharaoh of Egypt. After recognizing his Israelite heritage and killing and Egyptians in defense of a slave, Moses escaped to the Sinai Desert where he lived for forty years as a shepherd. In the desert God revealed Himself to Moses and spoke through a burning bush that was not consumed. God commanded Moses to lead the Israelites from their slavery. Moses returned to Egypt and after a series of ten miraculous plagues upon the Egyptians was able to gain the release of the Israelites. The final plague

was death to the firstborn of every house in Egypt. Israelites that ate a sacred meal of roasted lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread and who smeared lamb's blood on their door posts were passed over by the angel of death. When the Israelites fled Egypt they were pursued by pharaoh, God parted the waters of the Red Sea for the Israelites to cross through on dry land. This event, along with the Passover, became a main part of Jewish history, an act in which God intervened to deliver His chosen people.

The Books of the Law

After crossing the Red Sea God communicated the law to the Israelites through Moses. Ten Commandments are the basics to Jewish life (Exodus 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21). Basically these commandments stress obedience and loyalty to God and decent behavior toward members of the community. The first five books of the Holy Bible called Pentateuch became the single most important part of the Bible for Judaism. It is to this material that Jews have turned for centuries, looking for inspiration and guidance. This material became the basis for the later Mishnah and Talmud, which in turn became central for Judaism. It is at this point that Judaism is defined as a religion of the law and Jews as a people primarily concerned with obedience to the laws of God.

Talmud

In addition to the written scriptures we have an "Oral Torah," a tradition explaining what the scriptures mean and how to interpret them and apply the Laws. Orthodox Jews believe God taught the Oral Torah to Moses, and he taught it to others, down to the present day. This tradition was maintained in oral form only until about the 2nd century A.D., when the oral law was compiled and written down in a document called the Mishnah.

Over the next few centuries, additional commentaries elaborating on the Mishnah were written down in Jerusalem and Babylon. These additional commentaries are known as the Gemara. The Gemara and the Mishnah together are known as the Talmud. This was completed in the 5th century AD.

There are actually two Talmuds: the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian one is more comprehensive, and is the one most people mean when they refer to The Talmud.

Sacrifices and offerings

God was worshipped by burning animal sacrifices on altars built in the open. The Israelites did not worship their God in a building or temple until the time of Solomon (961-922 BC). Offering of animal sacrifice continued with the flesh burned in the courtyard of the Temple while prayers were offered to God inside the Temple.

- ❖ Burning Offering; signifies atonement for sin and complete dedication to God
- ❖ Grain offering: this accompanied all burnt offerings. It signified thanksgiving to God
- ❖ Peace offering: Expresses fellowship between the worshiper and God. There are three types 1) Thank offering expressed as gratitude for an unexpected

blessing. 2) Votive offering expressed gratitude for a blessing granted when a vow had been made while asking for the blessing. 3) Freewill offering expressed gratitude to God without regard to any specific blessing

- ❖ Sin Offering: Was for the atonement of sins committed unknowingly, especially where no restitution was possible. The sin offering was of no avail in cases of defiant rebellion against God.
- ❖ Trespass Offering: atoned for sins committed unknowingly, especially where restitution was possible

The practice of sacrifice stopped in the year 70 A.D., when the Roman army destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, the place where sacrifices were offered. The Torah specifically commands the Jews not to offer sacrifices wherever they feel like it; they are only permitted to offer sacrifices in the place that God has chosen for that purpose. (Deut. 12:13-14) It would be a sin to offer sacrifices in any other place.

The Synagogue

Away from the land of Israel the Jews were forced to accept a new concept of God and new institutions of worship. Because great distances separated them from the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews of the Diaspora developed the institution of the synagogue as a local center for prayer and study. The word 'synagogue' is derived from the Greek word *synagoge* or 'assembly'. A synagogue can exist wherever there is a copy of the Scripture (Torah and ten adult (over thirteen years of age) Jewish males. Ten adult males constitute a quorum, or a 'minyan. Wherever this combination exists, there can be prayer and instruction.

Along with the synagogue arose the figure of the rabbi. The rabbi is not a priest or a minister in the traditional sense. The word 'rabbi' literally means 'my master'. With the establishment of the Torah as the voice of God, there also arose the need for someone to spend time studying the Scripture and teaching the community. Those persons who had the time, interest and intelligence to study gradually began to be singled out and eventually became known as rabbis.

The Messiah

Jews live with the hope that God would send a messiah to defeat the enemies of the Jews and reestablish the ancient kingdom of David. The word Messiah is an Anglicization of the Hebrew, "moshiach" literally means the anointed one, and refers to the ancient practice of anointing kings with oil when they took the throne. The Messiah is a man who will be chosen by God to put an end to all evil in the world, rebuild the Temple, and bring the exiles back to Israel and usher in the world to come. He will be anointed as king in the End of Days.

Lecture 3: Christianity

“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4,5)

Introduction

When everything was ready for God to fulfill His promise of Salvation, He sent His Son, Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ, to pay for our sins by dying on the cross. He also established the Church of the New Testament, and through His teaching, and the guiding and protection of the Holy Spirit, the theology of Christianity has been formulated based on both the Old and New Testaments.

The Concept of Trinity and the Oneness of God:

God is spirit, infinite and fills every place and time. He is eternal and has no end. He is perfect in every thing, including mercy and justice.

God is one “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one” (Deut 6:4). Also, “but God is one” (Galatians. 3:20).

God is one in three hypostases. This is essential in order for His attributes to be eternal. For example, if God is merciful then this attribute of God was not there before creating man, or it is an eternal character of God? The three hypostases are the perfect number for all God’s characters to be eternal.

God exist by His own self (Father). He has a mind (Logos) and has life (Holy Spirit). This concept does not contradict the oneness of God. For example, the Father is the origin of truth, the Son is the truth and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

A close example, though not very exact, is the sun, while it is only one sun, but from it the light is born and the heat proceeds. This is similar to the concept that the Son is born from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him.

The sonship of the second hypostasis does not mean a product of sexual relation as in the world of humans. It is spiritual and not materialistic as light comes out of light. It is not under the span of time, nor has any separation in it.

The concept of Trinity is expressed in both Old and New Testaments.

- ❖ “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The word God in Hebrews is “Eloheem” and this word is a plural. Its singularity is “Eloh”.
- ❖ “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26).
- ❖ “Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22).
- ❖ “Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Genesis 11:7).
- ❖ “I *am* He, I *am* the First, I *am* also the Last. ... I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; From the time that it was, I *was* there. And now the **Lord**

GOD and His Spirit Have sent Me (Isaiah 48:12-16). Clearly in this scripture there is a mention of the trinity.

- ❖ “The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.” (Psalms 110:1).
- ❖ “Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What *is* His name, and what *is* His Son’s name, If you know? (Proverbs 30:4).
- ❖ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).
- ❖ “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7).
- ❖ “The grace of the Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is God incarnate:

- ❖ Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is God: “Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God” (Romans 9:5). Some other verses are: John 1:1, John 20:28, 1 Tim 3:16, Acts 20:28, Isaiah 7:14, Colossians 2:9.
- ❖ Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is the Logos (Word): “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Some other verses are: 1 John 5:7 and Rev 19:13.
- ❖ Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16: 16). Some other verses are: John 20:30,31, Luke 1:32,33, John 1:49, Matthew 27:54, John 1:34, Acts 8: 28-37.
- ❖ Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Begotten Son of God: “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*” (John 1: 18). Some other verses are: John 3:16,18, 1 John 4:9.
- ❖ There are many other verses showing that the Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is one with the Father and equal to Him. For example, Scripture proclaims Him as the following: He is the first and last, the Lord of Sabbath, the Lord of glory, the Savior, the judge.
- ❖ Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is God incarnate: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory” (1 Tim 3:16).
 - He was conceived in His mother’s womb by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:34,35).
 - He grew up as a normal boy, developing physically, mentally and emotionally (Luke 2:40-52).
 - He aged up to His thirties (John 8:57).
 - Physically, He hungered (Matthew 4:2), thirsted (John 19:28), He became tired (Mark 4:38), He breathed (Luke 23:46), etc.
 - Emotionally, He expressed sorrow (Matthew 26:38), wonder (Mark 6:6), anger and grief (Mark 3:5), compassion (Mark 1:41), etc.

The Holy Spirit is God:

1. St. Paul says “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). He also said “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you” (1 Corinthians 6:19). Thus, He used the words God and Holy Spirit in place of each other.
2. Similarly, St. Paul said “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim 3:16), and St. Peter said “for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as *they were* moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21). Thus, God and the Holy Spirit are one.
3. St. Peter said to Ananias “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit ... You have not lied to men but to God.” (Acts 5:3,4).
4. The Holy Spirit has the same attributes of God.
 - He is a creator - “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created” (Psalms 104:30).
 - He is powerful - “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8).
 - He knows everything - “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10).
 - He exists everywhere - “you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you” (1 Corinthians 3:16).
 - He gives life - “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Romans 8:11).
 - He is eternal and forever - “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).
 - He forgives sins - “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord The Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Christ is the Fulfillment of the Old Testament Prophecies

Prophecy	Old Testament Verses	New Testament Fulfillment
Christ is from the seeds of Abraham	Genesis 12: 7, 13: 15, 15: 18, 17: 7-10	Acts 7: 5, Romans 4: 13,16, Galatians 3: 16,29
He is from the seeds of Isaac	Genesis 17: 19, 21: 12, 26: 3,4	Romans 9: 7, Hebrews 11: 18.
He is from the seeds of Jacob	Numbers 24: 17-19	Matthew 2: 2
He is from the tribe of Judah	Genesis 49: 10	Hebrews 7: 14, Rev 5: 5
He is the Redeemer	Job 19: 25-27	Galatians 4: 4,5

He is the Son of God	Psalms 2: 7, Proverbs 30: 4	Matthew 3: 17, Mark 1: 11. Luke 1: 35, Acts 13: 33
Born from a woman	Genesis 3: 15	Luke 2: 7
Born from a virgin	Isaiah 7: 14	Matthew 1: 22,23
Rein on the throne of Davis	2 Samuel 7: 16, Psalms 132: 11,15, Isaiah 9: 6,7, 16: 5, Jam 23: 5, ..	Luke 1: 31,32
His name is Emmanuel	Isaiah 7: 14	Matthew 1: 23
Will be proceeded by a forerunner	Isaiah 40: 3-5, Malachi 3: 1	Luke 1: 76-78, 3: 1-6
Born in Bethlehem	Micah 5: 2	Matthew 2: 1, 5: 6
Lives in Egypt for a while	Hosea 11: 1	Matthew 2: 14,15
Called Nazareth	Isaiah 11: 1	Matthew 2: 23
Filled by the Spirit	Psalms 45: 7, Isaiah 11: 2, 61: 1,2	Luke 4: 18-21
Heals many	Isaiah 53: 4,5, 29: 18,19	Matthew 8: 16,17
Deal with the Gentiles	Isaiah 9: 1,2, 42: 1-3	Matthew 4: 13-16, 12: 17-21
Speak in parables	Isaiah 6: 9,10	Matthew 13: 10-15
Be rejected by His Own	Psalms 69: 8, Isaiah 53: 3	John 1: 11, 7: 5
Entering Jerusalem victoriously	Zechariah 9: 9	Matthew 21: 4,5
The rejected cornerstone	Psalms 118: 22,23	Matthew 11: 42
Man of sorrow	Isaiah 53: 3	Matthew 26: 37,38
Betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver	Psalms 41: 9, 55: 12-14, Zechariah 11: 12,13	Matthew 26: 14-16
The potter's field	Jeremiah 18: 1-4, 32: 6-9, Zechariah 11: 12,13	Matthew 27: 7-10
Will be wept and spat upon Him	Isaiah 53: 12	Matthew 26: 67, 27: 26
Crucified with 2 thieves	Isaiah 53: 12	Mark 15: 27,28
Die for the sins of the people	Isaiah 53: 5,11	Matthew 27: 50
Given vinegar to drink	Psalms 69: 21	Matthew 27: 34,48
They will pierce His hands and feet	Psalms 22: 16, Zechariah 12: 10	John 19: 34,37, 20: 25-27
Cast a lot on His cloth	Psalms 22: 18	John 19: 23,24
Give up His soul to the Father	Psalms 31: 5	Luke 23: 46
His bones will not be broken	Exodus 12: 46, Numbers 9: 12, Psalms 34: 20	John 19: 33-36
Will be left alone	Psalms 22: 1	Matthew 27: 46, Mark 15: 34
False witnesses	Psalms 27: 12, 35: 11	Matthew 26: 60,61, Mark 14: 55-61

He will not speak during His trial	Isaiah 53: 7	Matthew 26: 63, 27: 12,14
Will rise from the dead	Psalms 16: 10, 49: 15	Matthew 28: 2-7, Luke 24: 51
Ascend to Heaven	Psalms 24: 7-10, 68: 18	Luke 24: 51
His second coming	Joel 2: 30,31	1 Thessalonians 5: 2, 2 Pt 3: 10
Sits at the right of His Father	Psalms 110: 1	Matthew 22: 41-45, 26: 64, Mark 12: 35, 16: 19, Acts 7: 56
Overcome death	Isaiah 25: 8	1 Corinthians 15: 54

Lecture 4: Christianity versus Judaism

Christ is the Savior the Jews were waiting for, and the Gentiles found true life in Him. Do we really think that Satan will accept the defeat easily? Satan's nature became only evil, and he does not leave an opportunity to destroy God's kingdom.

How does Satan fight the truth?

Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ described Satan as the father of all lies. If he makes a little lie to make man deviates from the truth then he has achieved his goal of destroying God's kingdom.

- Among Christians, Satan will try to change one thing here or there in order to steal the salvation from any one. This led to the birth of different denominations among Christians, and will be discussed in the next course.
- Among weak Christians, Satan twists their mind to an extreme ideas leading to the birth of cults. We will touch on this in the remaining lectures.
- People who are drawn by the desires of the flesh, yet they would like to feel good before God, Satan designed religions such as Islam to please their desires.
- Some people just refuse the authority of God on the universe, Satan designs earthly philosophy to reject the existence of God, giving birth to atheism.
- Those who enjoy the idea of many gods, Satan developed the Polytheism to lead them to destruction.

How did Satan manage to fool some Jews?

In order for God to teach man the concept of salvation, He used a literal means such as the Israelites becoming slave in Egypt to teach man the meaning of being in the devil hand. The exodus story symbolizes the need for a savior to deliver us from the hand of the devil. Crossing the Red sea is a symbol of baptism. Living in the wilderness being fed on the manna is a symbol of the need for the body and the blood of the Lord in the present life.

Those Jews who understood all these symbols, they became Christians, especially after they have seen how the prophecies in their books have been fulfilled in the person of Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ. However, some Jews prefer the earthly instead of the heavenly. For them, the Messiah must do literally like Moses.

Thus, current Jews are still waiting for the Messiah to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. They believe that before the time of the Messiah there shall be war and suffering (Ezekiel 38:16). The Messiah will bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people by bringing them back to Israel and restoring Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5). He will establish a government in Israel that will be the center of all world government, both for Jews and gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1). He will rebuild the Temple and re-establish its worship (Jeremiah 33:18). He will restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land (Jeremiah 33:15).

Were sacrifices a symbol of the savior to come?

Not according to Judaism. That is a Christian teaching that has no basis in Jewish thought. Jews don't believe in a savior, and don't believe that sacrifice has anything to do with a savior or messiah. Thus, they are missing on the basic point of salvation,

which is the redemption from the death punishment. So, current Jews cannot explain what happened to the death punishment came on Adam and Eve after falling into sin.

Current Variations in Judaism

There is a distinction between the Jewish people and the religion of Judaism. Not all Jewish people consider themselves to be religious. Many profess to be atheist, agnostics or secular. Recent statistics estimate that there are about 18 million Jews in the world. More than 1.8 million live in New York City, making it the largest concentration of Jews any where in the world.

The term Jew covers a multitude of religious practices and beliefs. The Jews of the world are widely divided in terms of there beliefs and practices

1. Orthodox Jews: this is the largest group within Judaism. Orthodox Judaism strives to preserve traditional Jewish culture and strict observance of the Law of Moses as interpreted by the rabbis. They resist the secularizing elements of modernity. Orthodox Jews attempt to stay as close as possible to the mature of biblical and Talmudic Judaism. Kosher food laws are stressed, along with strict observance of the Sabbath. In worship men and women are separated in the synagogue and both must cover their heads. Hebrew is the language of Orthodox worship.
2. Reform Judaism: is popular mainly in the United States and Europe. The Reformist tradition emphasizes the universality of traditional Jewish values, interfaith dialogue, and social activism. It attempts to be as modern as possible in its beliefs and practices. Its worship is usually on Friday evenings and its synagogues are called temples. Men and women sit together with uncovered heads. The vernacular is used throughout most of the service with Hebrew interspersed only occasionally. Organ music and choirs are common. Few members of Reform temples attempt to keep all of the kosher food laws or the Talmudic restrictions of the Sabbath. One of the most important developments of the Reform Judaism is the ordination of women as rabbis
3. Conservative Judaism: developed in the nineteenth century is between the Orthodox and the Reform. Conservative Judaism is firmly rooted in the rabbinical tradition, but is somewhat more relaxed in matters of religious practice than the Orthodox movement. It is distinguished from Orthodox Judaism by its greater concern with the scientific study of the Bible and rabbinical material. In its worship, the vernacular is used more than Hebrew. Unlike Reform Jews conservatives tend to worship on Saturday morning. Men are required to cover their heads with the traditional skullcap during worship. Many Conservatives attempt to abide by the biblical and Talmudic law regulation food and Sabbath observance.

Other Kinds of Judaism not considered major branches

- Reconstructionist Judaism: is an American offshoot of Conservative Judaism. It maintains that Judaism is a 'religious civilization' that constantly adapts to contemporary life. Reconstructionism is understood to be not only a religion but a culture, with its own history, laws and arts.
- Hasidic Judaism: Usually called Hasidism, is an ultra Orthodox movement characterized by strict observance of the Law of Moses, is socially separatist

- Zionism: is listed here because it is sometimes mistaken as a form of Judaism. In reality it is a political movement dating from the late nineteenth century.

Lecture 5: Islam

Islam started in the 7th century Arab Peninsula and quickly spread to all the Middle East and most of Europe. Below is how Muslims people introduce their religion to others.

What Is Islam?

The religion of Islam is the acceptance of and obedience to the teachings of God which He revealed to His last prophet, Muhammad.

Some Basic Islamic Beliefs

1. Belief in God:

Muslims believe in one unique incomparable God, Who has neither son nor partner; and that none has the right to be worshipped but Him alone. He is the true God, and every other deity is false. He has the most magnificent names and sublime perfect attributes. No one shares His divinity, or His attributes.

In the Quran, God is described as follows:

“He is God, the One. God, to Whom the creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him.” (Quran, 112:1-4)

God is not Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ, and Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is not God. Even Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ himself rejected this. God has said in the Quran:

“Indeed, they have disbelieved who have said, “God is the Messiah (Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ), son of Mary.” The Messiah said, “Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates partners in worship with God, then God has forbidden Paradise for him, and his home is the Fire (Hell). For the wrongdoers, there will be no helpers.” (Quran, 5:72)

God is not a trinity. God has said in the Quran:

“Indeed, they disbelieve who say, ‘God is the third of three (in a trinity),’ when there is no god but one God. If they desist not from what they say, truly, a painful punishment will befall the unbelievers among them. Would they not rather repent to God and ask His forgiveness? For God is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful. The Messiah (Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ), son of Mary, was no more than a messenger... “(Quran, 5:73-75)

The Arabic word *Allah* means God (the one and only true God who created the whole universe). This word *Allah* is a name for God, which is used by Arabic speakers, both Arab Muslims and Arab Christians. This word cannot be used to designate anything other than the one true God. The Arabic word *Allah* occurs in the Quran about 2700 times. In Aramaic, a language related closely to Arabic and the language that Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ habitually spoke, God is also referred to as Allah.

2. **Belief in the Angels:**
Muslims believe in the existence of the angels and that they are honored creatures. The angels worship God alone, obey Him, and act only by His command. Among the angels is Gabriel, who brought down the Quran to Muhammad.

3. **Belief in God's Revealed Books:**
Muslims believe that God revealed books to His messengers as proof for mankind and as guidance for them. Among these books is the Quran, which God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. God has guaranteed the Quran's protection from any corruption or distortion. God has said:
Indeed, We have sent down the Quran, and surely We will guard it (from corruption). (Quran, 15:9)

4. **Belief in the Prophets and Messengers of God:**
Muslims believe in the prophets and messengers of God, starting with Adam, including Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ (peace be upon them). But God's final message to man, a reconfirmation of the eternal message, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last prophet sent by God.

5. **Belief in the Day of Judgment:**
Muslims believe in the Day of Judgment (the Day of Resurrection) when all people will be resurrected for God's judgment according to their beliefs and deeds.

6. **Belief in *Al-Qadar*:**
Muslims believe in *Al-Qadar*, which is Divine Predestination, but this belief in Divine Predestination does not mean that human beings do not have freewill. Rather, Muslims believe that God has given human beings freewill. This means that they can choose right or wrong and that they are responsible for their choices. (So what is *Al-Qadar* then?!)

The belief in Divine Predestination includes belief in four things: 1) God knows everything. He knows what has happened and what will happen. 2) God has recorded all that has happened and all that will happen. 3) Whatever God wills to happen happens, and whatever He wills not to happen does not happen. 4) God is the Creator of everything.

Some Benefits of Islam

1. **The Door to Eternal Paradise**
The Prophet Muhammad said that the lowest in rank among the dwellers of Paradise will have ten times the like of this world, and he or she will have whatever he or she desires and ten times like it. Also, the Prophet Muhammad said: {A space in Paradise equivalent to the size of a foot would be better than the world and what is in it.} He also said: {In Paradise there are things which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human mind has thought of.} He also said: {The most miserable man in the world of those meant for Paradise will be dipped once in Paradise. Then he will be asked, "Son of Adam, did you ever face any misery? Did you ever experience any hardship?"

So he will say, "No, by God, O Lord! I never faced any misery, and I never experienced any hardship."}

If you enter Paradise, you will live a very happy life without sickness, pain, sadness, or death; God will be pleased with you; and you will live there forever. God has said in the Quran:

"But those who believe and do good deeds, We will admit them to gardens (Paradise) in which rivers flow, lasting in them forever.... "(Quran, 4:57)

2. Salvation from Hellfire

This life is our only chance to win Paradise and to escape from Hellfire, because if someone dies in disbelief, he will not have another chance to come back to this world to believe.

"Those who have disbelieved and died in disbelief, the earth full of gold would not be accepted from any of them if one offered it as a ransom. They will have a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers." (Quran, 3:91)

Is There Any Sacred Source Other than the Quran?

Yes. The *sunnah* (what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, or approved of) is the second source in Islam. The *sunnah* is comprised of *hadeeths*, which are reliably transmitted reports by the Prophet Muhammad's companions of what he said, did, or approved of. Belief in the *sunnah* is a basic Islamic belief.

Who Is the Prophet Muhammad?

Muhammad was born in Mecca in the year 570. Since his father died before his birth and his mother died shortly thereafter, he was raised by his uncle who was from the respected tribe of Quraysh. He was raised illiterate, unable to read or write, and remained so till his death. His people, before his mission as a prophet, were ignorant of science and most of them were illiterate. As he grew up, he became known to be truthful, honest, trustworthy, generous, and sincere. He was so trustworthy that they called him the Trustworthy. Muhammad was very religious, and he had long detested the decadence and idolatry of his society.

At the age of forty, Muhammad received his first revelation from God through the Angel Gabriel. The revelations continued for twenty-three years, and they are collectively known as the Quran.

As soon as he began to recite the Quran and to preach the truth which God had revealed to him, he and his small group of followers suffered persecution from unbelievers. The persecution grew so fierce that in the year 622 God gave them the command to emigrate. This emigration from Mecca to the city of Madinah, some 260 miles to the north, marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

After several years, Muhammad and his followers were able to return to Mecca, where they forgave their enemies. Before Muhammad died, at the age of sixty-three,

the greater part of the Arabian Peninsula had become Muslim, and within a century of his death, Islam had spread to Spain in the West and as far East as China. Among the reasons for the rapid and peaceful spread of Islam was the truth and clarity of its doctrine. Islam calls for faith in only one God, Who is the only one worthy of worship.

What Do Muslims Believe about Our Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ?

Muslims respect and revere The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). They consider him one of the greatest of God's messengers to mankind. The Quran confirms his virgin birth, and a chapter of the Quran is entitled '*Maryann*' (Mary). The Quran describes the birth of The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ as follows:

"[Remember] when the angels said, 'O Mary, God gives you good news of a word from Him (God), whose name is the Messiah The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ Christ, son of Mary, revered in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near [to God]. He will speak to the people from his cradle and as a man, and he is of the righteous.' She said, 'My Lord, how can I have a child when no mortal has touched me?' He said, 'So [it will be]. God creates what He wills. If He decrees a thing, He says to it only, 'Be!' and it is.'" (Quran, 3:45-47)

The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ was born miraculously by the command of God, the same command that had brought Adam into being with neither a father nor a mother. God has said:

The case of The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ with God is like the case of Adam. He created him from dust, and then He said to him, "Be!" and he came into being. (Quran, 3:59)

During his prophetic mission, The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ performed many miracles. In the Quran God tells us that The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ said:

"I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I make for you the shape of a bird out of clay, I breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by God's permission. I heal the blind from birth and the leper. And I bring the dead to life by God's permission. And I tell you what you eat and what you store in your houses...." (Quran, 3:49)

Muslims believe that The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ was not crucified. It was the plan of The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ' enemies to crucify him, but God saved him and raised him up to Him. And the likeness of The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ was put over another man. The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ's enemies took this man and crucified him, thinking that he was the Lord The Lord Jesus Christ.

Neither Muhammad nor The Lord Jesus Christ came to change the basic doctrine of the belief in one God, brought by earlier prophets, but rather to confirm and renew it.

What Are the Five Pillars of Islam?

The Five Pillars of Islam are the framework of the Muslim life. They are the testimony of faith, prayer, giving *zakat* (support of the needy), fasting during the

month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime for those who are able.

1. The Testimony of Faith:

The testimony of faith is saying with conviction, "*La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammadur rasoolu Allah.*" This testimony of faith is called the *Shahada*, a simple formula which should be said with conviction in order to convert to Islam. The testimony of faith is the most important pillar of Islam.

2. Prayer:

Muslims perform five prayers a day. Each prayer does not take more than a few minutes to perform. Prayer in Islam is a direct link between the worshipper and God. There are no intermediaries between God and the worshipper.

Prayers are performed at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and night. A Muslim may pray almost anywhere, such as in fields, offices, factories, or universities.

3. Giving *Zakat* (Support of the Needy):

All things belong to God, and wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. The original meaning of the word *zakat* is both 'purification' and 'growth.' Giving *zakat* means 'giving a specified percentage on certain properties to certain classes of needy people.' The percentage which is due on gold, silver, and cash funds that have reached the amount of about 85 grams of gold and held in possession for one lunar year is two and a half percent. Our possessions are purified by setting aside a small portion for those in need, and, like the pruning of plants, this cutting back balances and encourages new growth.

4. Fasting the Month of Ramadan:

Every year in the month of Ramadan, all Muslims fast from dawn until sundown, abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations.

Although the fast is beneficial to health, it is regarded principally as a method of spiritual self-purification. By cutting oneself off from worldly comforts, even for a short time, a fasting person gains true sympathy with those who go hungry, as well as growth in his or her spiritual life.

5. The Pilgrimage to Mecca:

The annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca is an obligation once in a lifetime for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. About two million people go to Mecca each year from every corner of the globe. Although Mecca is always filled with visitors, the annual *Hajj* is performed in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Male pilgrims wear special simple clothes which strip away distinctions of class and culture so that all stand equal before God.

The rites of the *Haj* include circling the Kaaba seven times and going seven times between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa, as Hagar did during her search for water. Then the pilgrims stand together in Arafat and ask God for what they wish and for His forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Day of Judgment.

The end of the *Hajj* is marked by a festival, *Eid Al-Adha*, which is celebrated with prayers. This, and *Eid al-Fitr*, a feast-day commemorating the end of Ramadan, are the two annual festivals of the Muslim calendar.

This is how Muslims attract others to Islam. It sounds simple, clear and to the point. In the next lecture, we will show what the above has neglected, and the other things which they never mentioned above.

Lecture 6: Refuting Islam

Salvation

In the above introduction, Islam omits completely the original sin and the death penalty associated with. Thus, leaving the question of salvation unanswered. Obviously, this basic point was introduced in the book of Genesis, which Islam does not reject. However, when they are confronted, Muslims will say that the current version of the Bible is corrupted!

Also, if we exclude the teaching of Islam about The Lord Jesus Christ (that He is not God), and His death on the cross (He was taken by God to heaven, while Judas was crucified in His place because God changed his face to look like The Lord Jesus Christ!) then we wonder about the contribution of Islam! Basically, Islam came to reject the salvation work of The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ and to leave man under the wage of sin which is death. Looking at it from this angle, it is clear that Satan is the only winner by Islam!

Character of the Prophet

It is well known that an ambassador is a representative of the country which sent him. If he speaks, then it is the country speaking. If he makes a fool out of himself, then it is embarrassing to the whole country. The case is the same when we speak about a messenger of God. Muhammad's life is embarrassing to all Muslims and the god who sent him. For example, Muhammad married at age 25 a woman who is 15 years older than him. At age of 40 (15 years in his marriage), Muhammad started to receive revelations from the angel, yet he thought that it was from the Jinn! However, his 55 years old wife convinced him that it is a revelation from god, and that he should teach it to others. Ten years later, his wife died, when Muhammad was 50 years old. He lived until the age of 62. In those 12 years, Muhammad married many wives! At the time of his death, he had 12 wives whom he called the mothers of the believers, and 2 concubines. One of his wives was a widow of one of his disciples. Interestingly enough he married his daughter-in-law by simply asking his adopted son to divorce her. Another wife was the daughter of his life long friend Abu Bakr. She was a child, 6 years old when he married her. He molested this child until she became 9 years old, then he knew her as a wife! When his wives became angry at him because of things like these, his god sided with him by several revelations. In One of these revelation, god gave a permission to any believer woman, if she will, she may give herself to the messenger of god and that will not be considered adultery! Now tell me what these actions reveal about the messenger and his god!

The god of Islam

Muslims claim that they worship the same God of Christianity. They deny the Trinity, and they give God 99 names some of them are really strange, such as the killer, the deceiver, the proud, the grateful one. The god of Islam has been described as the best creator, hinting that there are other creators! Another strange character of god is that he prays! In the Arabic version of the Koran, god and his angels pray on the prophet. Thus, whenever the name of Muhammad is mentioned, Muslims always say "god pray on him and make peace". In the English translation, this phrase sounds odd, so Muslims replaced it by "Peace be upon him". It is clear that Muslims version of god is completely different from the God of Christianity.

Muslims claim that the best thing Muhammad made was bringing the Koran. It is the final revelation of god, it is perfect book, and protected by God from any alteration. This claim is very bias.

The Koran is full of contradictions. Here are some examples:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion” Sura 2: 256	Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day Sura 9: 29
“O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah with the care which is due to Him” Sura 3: 102.	“Therefore be careful of (your duty to) Allah as much as you can” Sura 64: 16
“now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.” Sura 13:28	“Those only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned” Sura 8:2
“Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency” Sura 7:28	“And when We wish to destroy a town, We send Our commandment to the people of it who lead easy lives” Sura 17:16
“but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one” Sura 4:3	“And you have it not in your power to do justice between wives, even though you may wish (it)” Sura 4:129

Women in Islam

Women in Islam are really under estimated. They are legally considered to be half the value of a man. A Muslim man may marry a non-Muslim girl, while a Muslim girl cannot marry a non-Muslim man. A Muslim man can marry up to a four women at one time, while a Muslim girl cannot marry more than one man at a time. In Islam, there is a legalized adultery. A man can divorce his wife, and marry her again, up to three times. After the third time, he cannot marry her again until she has been married to another man at least for one night! Also, a man is free to discipline his wives (Sura 4:34).

Islam & Terrorism

Islam is very much related to terrorism. The Koran refers to Christians as “infidels” and the Jews as “the children of pigs”. Islam’s agenda is to spread the religion to all people by any means possible. This is called “Jihad” which is required by every Muslim. The Koran says “So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, then smite the necks until when you have overcome them, then make (them) prisoners” Sura 47:4. The Koran further encourages killing the unbelievers over taking them as a prisoners “It is not fit for a prophet that he should take captives unless he has fought and triumphed in the land” Sura 8:67.

The ultimate goal of Islam is to establish Islamic authority over the whole world “and whoever did not judge by what Allah revealed, those are they that are the unbelievers” Sura 5:44. Of course, unbelievers are to be killed first and some of them will be taken prisoners as explained above. This goal can be achieved in three stages (1) When Muslims are forming a weak small minority living in a non-Islamic society then they apply the principle that “There is no compulsion in religion” Sura 2:256. (2) When they become a reasonably influential minority then they apply Sura 8:59,60 “And let not those who disbelieve think that they shall come in first; surely

they will not escape. And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know (but) Allah knows them; and whatever thing you will spend in Allah's way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly". (3) As soon as they became a minority with strength, influence and power, then they apply Sura 9:5 "then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captives and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush".

There are so many contradicting teachings between the Koran, the Hadiths (the sayings of the prophet), and the Sunna (imitation of the prophet), which are the three sources of the teaching. This also led to the presence of different sects within Islam; the Sunni (majority, 80%), the Shi'ite (believe that Muhammad's successors should be from his blood relatives), and few small sects such as the Wahhabis, the Druze, the Alawites and the Ahmadiyahs. Islam has been also a contributing factor in two religions; Sikhism and Baha'i.

Lecture 7: South Asian Religions

In the far east, a group of religions based on the view that “All is god and god is all”. This is known as “Pantheism” which give birth to different religions such as Hinduism, Taoism and some form of Buddhism.

Hinduism

The term “Hinduism” is derived from an ancient linguistic root that means ‘to flow’ and rivers have indeed been and have remained a central feature in this religious life of nearly a billion Indians.

Hinduism makes up around 13% of the world’s population. The vast majority of Hindus –some 700- million- live in India, where they account for 82% of the population. There are more than one million Hindus in North America

Hinduism can be traced back to around 1500 BC It began as a polytheistic and ritualistic religion. Brahman “all is one” is an impersonal monistic force. The highest form Brahman is called “nirguna’ which means ‘without attributes or qualities. The Hindu concept of god continued to develop in the direction of god being personal. Nirguna Brahman became Saguna Brahman, which is Brahman with attribute. This personified form of Brahman is also called Ishvara.

According to Hindu tradition Ishvara became known to humanity through the Trimurti (literally, ‘three manifestations’) of Brahman. Those manifestations include Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Siva (the destroyer). Each of the three deities has at least one devi or divine spouse. Ishvara became personified even further through the ten mythical incarnations of Vishnu called avatars. The forms of these incarnations include that of animals (fish, tortoise or boar) and persons (Rama, Krishna, Buddha).

It is estimated that there are 330 million other gods in Hinduism. In the course of its history, Hinduism has spawned three other religious movements that have since become world religions: Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism

Hindu scriptures were collected over hundreds of years, beginning with the writing of the oral traditions around the last half of the second millennium BC The scriptures are known as the Vedas ‘wisdom or ‘knowledge’. They were written to give the priests instructions as to how to perform the rituals. The concluding portions of the Veda are called the ‘Upanishads’, which are a synthesis of Vedic teachings. They are also called ‘Vedanta’. The general assumptions of the Upanishads include a belief in pantheism, karmic retribution and reincarnation.

1. Classification of Hinduism

Today there are three basic classifications of Hindu sects

- The abstract monists: stress the philosophical oneness of the universe instead of religious or theistic ideas
- The Vishnuites: devoted to the worship of the god Vishnu (in many different manifestations) as the supreme form of divinity

- The Shivaites: devoted to the worship of the god Shiva as the highest manifestation of divinity. TM with its philosophical concentration relates the monistic classification, while ISKCON believes that Krishna, the supreme god is also known as Vishnu and so they are identified with the Vishnuites.

2. Hindu Beliefs

- God:

There is no single Hindu idea of God. Hindu concepts of deity can include any of the following: monism (all existence is one substance); pantheism (all existence is divine); Panentheism (God is in creation as a soul is in a body); animism (God or gods live in non-human objects such as trees, rocks animals, etc); polytheism (there are many gods); henotheism (there is one god we worship among the many that exist); and monotheism (there is only one God)
- Karma and Samsara:

All souls are eternal and accountable for their own actions throughout time. Karma refers to the debt one's bad actions which must be atoned for in order for one to escape the wheel of samsara, or reincarnation (the soul inhabits successive human bodies) or transmigration (the soul inhabits successive bodies- human, animal or even plants or inanimate objects)
- Salvation:

The three major paths to Hindu 'salvation' include *karma marga*, the way of disinterested action; *bhakti marga*, the way of devotion and *jnana marga*, the path of knowledge or mystical insight. *Jnana marga* achieves self-realization through intuitive awareness and mystical insight.

3. ISKCON (Hare Krishna)

The second major Hindu sect that developed in the 15th century through the teachings of a man named Chaitanya, who instituted worship of Vishnu as God against the prevailing local worship of Shiva. Chaitanya taught that Krishna was the supreme personality of the Godhead.

Hare Krishna are known today in America for their fund-raising activities through public solicitation, their spiritual; chanting, their community vegetarian feasts and their often public ceremonies honoring their idols. ISKCON places of worship, called temples, preaching centers work independently of one another but under the direction of an area manager.

ISKCON Beliefs

- a. God:

Although the bulk of Hindu scripture is pantheistic (everything is a part of God) portions of the Hindu scripture notable the Bhagavad-Gita are basically monotheistic presentations of Hinduism. Bhagavad-Gita is the most sacred scripture of ISKCON. ISKCON belief in God is essentially monotheistic and Krishna is said to be the supreme personality of the /godhead. Any incarnation of the one God is incarnation of Krishna
- b. Christ:

The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is Krishna's Son but in apposition no more unique to God than any other man could strive to attain. To the Hare Krishna The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ is not the unique Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. He is not an incarnation of Krishna

- c. Salvation:
Salvation is obtained by removing one's karmic debt through devotion the Krishna and right actions through multiple incarnations. ISKCON salvation comes to those initiates who "follow the four regulative principles, chant sixteen rounds of the Hare Krishna *mantra* on beads every day, and follow all the regulated temple programs" also "From the body of any person who claps and dances before the Deity showing manifestations of ecstasy, all the birds of sinful activities fly away upwards"

4. Transcendental Meditation TM

TM is a spiritual practice or yoga introduced to the Western society by its founder Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as a religious exercise or philosophy. Encountering skepticism from non-religious westerners, Maharishi revamped his TM program and promoted the movement as a scientifically sound, non-religious psychological exercise designed to relieve stress to bring peace to the inner man thereby having a positive effect on society and to enable the advanced practitioner to participate in astral projection (his soul leaving his body) and levitation.

TM leaders persistently neglect to inform the public of TM's religious nature and of the fact that the motivational health or political program they are promoting is actually a TM front project

TM Beliefs

- a. God:
TM concentrates on those Hindu scriptures which present a pantheistic view of God. Therefore God is pantheistic and one's goal is to lose his won personality in the oneness of God.
- b. The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ:
TM ignores The Lord The Lord Jesus Christ almost entirely although Maharishi teaches that anyone can become as enlightened as The Lord Jesus Christ through the application of TM techniques.
- c. Salvation:
Is accomplished by realizing that one is in union with the Creative intelligence: "the answer to every problem is that there is no problem. Let a man perceive this truth and then he is without problems' this comes through practicing meditation "A huge mountain of sins extending for miles is destroyed by Union brought about through transcendental meditation without which there is no way out"

Conclusion:

Hinduism in all its forms denies the biblical Trinity, the deity of Christ and the doctrines of the Atonement, sin and salvation through the sacrifice of our Lord the Lord Jesus Christ Christ. It replaces resurrection with reincarnation and both grace and faith with human works. One cannot achieve peace with God through Hinduism or any of its sects.

Buddhism

Buddha means “Enlightened One”. Buddhism began in a region of northeast India, representing today’s Nepal.

1. Siddhartha Gautama

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama (born around 563 BC) the son of King Suddhodana Gautama, ruler over a small district on the Indian slope of the Himalayas. Shortly after Siddhartha’s birth a hermit named Asita allegedly had a vision of the ‘rejoicing of the gods at the birth of the man supreme, who was born for the welfare and bliss of the entire world’. Asita subsequently traveled to Suddhodana’s royal court where he was shown the child. The hermit allegedly prophesied that if this prince remains in the palace when grown up he will become a great king and subjugate the whole world, but if he forsakes the court life to embrace a religious life, he will become a Buddha the Savior of the world.

King Suddhodana believing that contact with human misery would prompt Siddhartha to leave home in search of spiritual truth immediately ordered his servants to forever shield the prince from all contact with evil and suffering. Siddhartha became a prisoner of luxury.

Legend has it that Siddhartha out of either curiosity or inner discontent eluded his royal attendants and ventured into the outside world. Over several days he visited a nearby park where he made some disturbing observations. The first day he encountered an old man bent by age, the second day he saw a diseased person possibly a leper. On his third trip he viewed a corpse and on the fourth day he met an ascetic monk. Siddhartha was never the same. He concluded that life is nothing but an experience plagued by sorrow. Siddhartha left home and began a quest of spiritual truth. He meditated alone under a tree in a state of bliss for seven weeks. During these seven weeks Siddhartha went through four trance-like stages, after which he achieved enlightenment. He was now worthy of the name Buddha ‘the enlighten one’. Gautama started teaching what he had learned. His sermons contained the Four Noble Truths which would serve as the foundational teachings of Buddhism. Gautama died in Kushinagara at the age of 80 of apparent food poisoning.

2. Buddhism teachings (Dharma)

Buddhism teachings deal with one basic goal how to escape samsara (the cycle of rebirth commonly known as reincarnation). Freedom from samsara leads to nirvana, which is commonly thought as a state of complete deliverance from pain and sorrow.

Buddha termed his Four Noble Truths *Paticvedhanana* which translated means ‘the wisdom of realization’

a. The First Noble Truth:

Dukkha (a bone twisted out of its joint) Life is full of sorrow and pain. To believe that life without suffering is possible is to believe an illusion. According to the Buddha people do not accept this truth but instead choose to cope with pain by deceiving themselves into thinking that life is also filled with happiness.

b. The Second Noble Truth: Tanha (Attachment)

The suffering we encounter is all due to the false desires of the senses that have been deceived into clinging to the impermanent world. The cause of suffering is desire, craving due to ignorance. All things in life are meaningless and insignificant because they are temporary.

- c. The Third Noble Truth: Nirodha (cessation)
The way out of suffering lies in the ability to disengage oneself completely from the false desires of the temporary self.

- d. The Fourth Noble Truth

Desire can be eliminated by following the Eightfold Path. (Marga)

Wisdom:

- Right Views (understanding)
- Right Aspirations (ambition)
- Ethical Conduct
- Right Speech (communication)
- Right Conduct (action)
- Right Livelihood (vocation)
- Mental Discipline
- Right Effort (endeavor)
- Right Mindfulness (mind control)
- Right Concentration (deep meditation)

The goal of all Buddhism is not heaven or being with God, for there is no God in Gautama's teaching. Rather they seek nirvana the elimination of all suffering desires and the illusion that the self exists.

Buddhism and Christianity:

Similarities:

- Buddhists are taught to live according to several precepts that are in harmony with Scripture such as refraining from stealing, committing adultery, and lying.
- Buddhists recognize that life is temporal. Nothing here has any eternity.
- Buddhism teaches that all people are subject to suffering. The Bible supports this belief, for pain and affliction are spoken often in Scripture. However, God's Word teaches that although suffering is not a pleasant experience it can be used to our benefit.

Dissimilarities:

- Sufferings:
Buddhism finds no redeeming value whatsoever in suffering. Suffering is only something to escape. Suffering does not intermittently intrude into human life; life is suffering. Christianity views suffering as allowed by God and used by Him to shape and refine us for eternal life.
- Reincarnation:
According to Buddhism reincarnation exists. Everyone must escape reincarnation through the false desires of the world. Self-effort is the key to obtaining nirvana. Christianity refuses reincarnation for it is contrary to the Holy Bible. Hebrew 9:27 teaches us that we live only one lifetime after which comes the judgment of our souls. Scripture points out that those who have come to faith in Christ will be in God's presence immediately after death, not reincarnated (Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:8)

Lecture 8: Christian Cults

Introduction

As discussed earlier, Satan fights the body of Christ by every mean. Among weak Christians, Satan twists their mind to extreme ideas leading to the birth of cults. Those who follow these cults are no longer considered Christians by the main stream Christians. Examples of these cults are:

- Jehovah's Witness
- The Mormons
- Christian Science

Jehovah's Witness

Jehovah's Witnesses, also known as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (with headquarters in Brooklyn, New York), was officially founded in 1884 [as the Zion's Watch Tower and Tract Society (originally the Zion's Watch Tower in 1879), officially adopting the name of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931], by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). In 1870, Russell was exposed to the teachings of William Miller, one of the founders of the Second Adventist Movement and acquired an interest in end time prophecies. Russell originally denied the doctrine of Hell, and would go on to reject nearly every other Christian doctrine, as well as add many physically and spiritually dangerous doctrines of his own making. Many of these unique and bizarre teachings were to be found in his six volume series titled, *Studies in the Scriptures*.

For the year 2000, the Watchtower Society claims a worldwide membership of over six million (about one million U.S.) in more than 91,000 congregations in 235 countries speaking 340 languages, and takes in approximately 300,000 new members each year (288,907 in 2000). According to JW statistics, yearly proselytizing is accomplished via 4.8 million home Bible studies and 1.2 billion hours of witnessing. The JWs field over 500,000 full and part-time missionaries. Instruction and training are provided for all JWs at five meetings a week, held primarily in "Kingdom Halls." Every week, an average of 45 new JW congregations is formed. [In the year 2000 in the United States alone, it was reported that 988,000 Jehovah's Witnesses spent more than 181 million hours in field service (i.e., door-to-door witnessing and Bible studies).

JW leadership claims its victims by asserting itself to be the sole Christian religion and authority on the earth today, as well as God's mouthpiece or prophet. The Watchtower further disrupts families through its harsh and unbiblical interpretation of "dis-fellowship" and the practice of "shunning." Family members who are former JWs are labeled by Watchtower adherents as "apostates" and prevented from even social contact. Dis-fellowship or disassociated children, parents, and grandparents are kept from any type of communication with active members of the organization. Divorces are common within the sect when one member becomes disillusioned with Watchtower teaching and mind-control.

Not only has the name of this cult been changed time and again, but they also change their doctrines regularly -- between 1917 and 1928, they changed their doctrines 148 times! Russell died in 1916 and was replaced by the second president, Joseph F. Rutherford. "A process of replacing Russell's writings with Rutherford's began in 1921 with the publication of Rutherford's *Harp of God*. Between 1921 and 1941, Rutherford was to write twenty books and numerous pamphlets, which would

slowly revise the doctrine and structure left him by Russell" (*Encyclopedia of American Religions*, G. Melton, Vol. 1, p. 485). One of Rutherford's books that caused a great amount of controversy was the seventh volume of the *Studies in the Scriptures*.

Russell adopted many of his doctrines from the Seventh-Day Adventists, but the JWs began to emphasize door-to-door evangelism and literature distribution after Russell's death and subsequent leadership assumption by Joseph Franklin Rutherford. The JWs have published over ten billion pieces of literature since 1928. Its main periodicals are *The Watchtower* magazine (circulation of over 20 million in more than 130 languages) and *Awake!* (About 16 million copies in more than 80 languages), both published semi-monthly.

Historically, the JWs are best known for their practices of refusing (1) to serve in the military; (2) to salute the flag; (3) to celebrate Christmas, birthdays, or other holidays; and (4) to give or to accept blood transfusions. [Rejecting the medical practices of vaccinations, organ transplants, and blood transfusions, the Watchtower has caused the deaths of many of its members throughout its history. Interestingly, vaccinations and organ transplants have now been acknowledged by the Watchtower as acceptable practices, contradicting their previous doctrinal position.] (Although some of these practices are neither Biblical nor unbiblical in and of themselves, depending upon one's motives and the exact nature of the practice, the *reasons* the JWs give for them often are unbiblical.)

Below are the highlights of what JWs believe concerning their source of authority, the Godhead, Christ, sin, salvation, heaven and hell, etc.

1. Source of Authority.

JWs claim the Bible as their final authority, but Russell's writings, especially *Studies in the Scriptures*, are considered "the light of the Scriptures." JWs have their own translation of the Scriptures (*New World Translation*, published in 1961), which reflects *the binding interpretations* of the group's leaders. The JWs' *New World Translation* greatly perverts the Scriptures to avoid placing themselves under the judgment of God (cf. John. 1:1; 8:58; I Tim. 2:6; Ac. 10:36; Col. 1:16-17; 2:9-10; etc.). Hence, the leader's interpretation of the Bible, not the Bible itself, is the final authority of JWs. *The Watchtower* magazine is one of the JWs main sources of doctrine, and is considered authority. JWs believe that God is not a triune God, but only "Jehovah God" (*Let God Be True*, pp. 100-101). They teach that Trinitarianism is a belief in three gods, and thereby, Satan-inspired polytheism.

2. God the Father

Known as Jehovah, the Watchtower considers Him to be the only true eternal God, the Almighty. They write, "There was, therefore, a time when Jehovah was all alone in universal space" (*Let God Be True*, p. 25). Being alone, the first creative act of Jehovah was to create His Son

3. The Lord Jesus Christ Christ.

Since JWs do not believe in the Trinity, they also do not believe that The Lord Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. They add the word "other" four times to Colossians 1:16,17, teaching that Christ was God's *first* creation, i.e., the reincarnation of Michael the archangel created by Jehovah, rather than *the Creator*.

5. Use of Name Jehovah.
JWs use the name "Jehovah" only for God (in order to distinguish between God and The Lord Jesus Christ), while failing to recognize that The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of "Jehovah" in Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 3:3.
6. Resurrection of Christ.
JWs deny the bodily resurrection of Christ through their teaching that the body of Christ was annihilated by God -- not risen -- but rather a new one was *created* three days after His death. This they call the "resurrection" of Christ. Thus, The Lord Jesus Christ was "resurrected" as a "glorious spirit creature" and does *not* now have a glorified physical body. Instead, they claim The Lord Jesus Christ arose spiritually and only "materialized" at various times after His resurrection so He could be seen alive. (*Awake!*, 7/22/73, p. 4).
7. The Holy Spirit.
JWs deny the deity of the third person of the Trinity, as either God or as a person. They claim that the Holy Spirit is only an impersonal "active force of Almighty God which moves His servants to do His will." (*Reasoning From the Scriptures*, pp. 406-407; *The Watchtower*, 6/1/54, p. 24).
8. Sin.
JWs believe that the first man, Adam, disobeyed Jehovah when tempted by the angel Lucifer, who was jealous of man. As a result of disobedience, Adam and all his descendants lost the right to life and so became liable to death. This liability is applied to temporal death only.
9. Salvation.
JWs claim everlasting life is a reward for doing the will of God and carrying out one's dedication -- in other words, salvation is a reward for good works. (JWs are expected to spend five hours per week in door-to-door visitation and witnessing, are responsible for selling twelve subscriptions to *The Watchtower* magazine each month, and are responsible for conducting a "Bible study" each month in the homes of their converts.) According to JW theology, a person has one of three possible destinies. The Anointed (144,000) will be in heaven to reign with Jehovah God. The rest of the faithful Jehovah's Witnesses (not of the 144,000) will live forever on a paradise Earth. Both of these classifications are determined to a great extent on membership in the Watchtower organization as well as going door-to-door spreading the message of the Watchtower. Those people who are not members of the Watchtower organization will be destroyed by Jehovah God and cease to exist. There is no concept of eternal punishment or hell in Watchtower theology (*Let God Be True*, pp. 90-95, 289). They also believe that men will have a second chance, after death, to be saved.
10. The Body of Christ.
JWs believe that the members of the spiritual Body of Christ, or "Christian Congregation," number only 144,000 (Rev. 7:4-8). Most of those members of Christ's Body are now deceased and are reigning with The Lord Jesus Christ in heaven since 1918. (Anybody born after 1936 cannot be in that number.) The remaining members still on earth, approximately 8,000 (out of whom are selected the "Governing Body"), are known as the "Remnant." They are collectively known as Jehovah God's "channel of communication" to men. They are the only ones "born again" and are the only ones who have a hope of going to Heaven. The rest of Jehovah's faithful witnesses only hope to be worthy enough to inherit the Earth, and will never see "The Lord Jesus Christ/Michael," nor will they ever go to Heaven. All "so called Christendom" will be destroyed at Armageddon.
11. Soul Sleep.

JWs deny the immortality of the soul. They do not believe the soul can exist apart from the body, but that a corpse remains in an unconscious state in the grave waiting for the resurrection.

12. Annihilation of the Wicked.

JWs teach that the "second death" is annihilation and extinction -- the wicked will cease to exist and will not suffer everlasting torment. They claim that a "doctrine of a burning hell" is "wholly unscriptural," "unreasonable," "contrary to God's love" and "repugnant to justice". They claim that "hell" is the grave.

13. Prophecy.

The Bible lists six identifying marks of false prophets, any one of which is sufficient for identification:

- a. Through signs and wonders they lead astray after false gods (Deut. 13:1-4);
- b. Their prophecies don't come to pass (Deut. 18:20-22)
- c. They contradict God's Word (Isaiah. 8:20);
- d. They bear bad fruit (Matthew. 7:18-20)
- e. Men speak well of them (Luke. 6:26);
- f. They deny that The Lord Jesus Christ, the one and only Christ, has come once and for all in the flesh (1 John. 4:3), thereby denying His sufficiency in all matters of life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

Most cults are founded upon false prophecies, which, if pointed out, offer an effective way to open blind eyes and rescue cultists. Russell's false prophecies formed the basis for what became The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Russell declared that the Second Coming had taken place invisibly in October 1874, and the Lord was truly present, and that in 1914 the faithful (the 144,000) would be translated to heaven and the wicked destroyed. Armageddon (which began in 1874) would culminate in 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's rulers and the end of the world. C.T. Russell, still on earth, died in 1916.

In the early 1920s, JWs zealously distributed on the streets and from door to door a book titled *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*. It was prophesied, "The year 1925 is a date definitely and clearly marked in the Scriptures, even more clearly than that of 1914. We may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old ... to the condition of human perfection" ("*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*," *The Watchtower*, 7/15/24, p. 89). The JWs even built a house in San Diego where the patriarchs were to live and tried to deed it to King David (The house was quietly sold in 1954). In the early 1940s, JWs were declaring that Armageddon, only months away, would end World War II and the defeat of the Nazis would usher in God's rule on earth (*The Watchtower*, 12/41). Their book, *Children*, suggested that plans to marry and have children be postponed until after Armageddon. It's been a long wait! Not giving up, they later prophesied that God's millennial kingdom would commence in 1975. Again JWs were told not to engage in any plans for this world, including marriage and having children. Many quit their jobs, sold their homes, and dedicated themselves to going door to door. All in all, the Watchtower has predicted the end of the world for 1914, 1918, 1925, 1975, and 1989.

Lecture 9: Mormonism

Mormonism, known as *The Church of The Lord Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints or LDS* (with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah -- a state that is now 70% Mormon), was officially founded in 1830 by Joseph Smith Jr. (1805-1844). Smith claimed to have had a personal visit from God the Father at the age of 15, who introduced him to Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ then supposedly told him not to join any church because they were all wrong and all the Christian church's doctrines "were abominations" (*Joseph Smith -- History 19, Pearl of Great Price*). After Smith's murder in 1844, Brigham Young took the cult to Utah, where there is now a major University named after him, and the number of Mormons exceed one million. The Mormon Church currently claims about 11 million baptized members worldwide (5.2 million U.S., ranking it 5th among the largest 25 U.S. denominations), up from about 2.5 million in 1970. Over the last decade, nearly 300,000 individuals over the age of eight have joined the Mormon Church every year. Membership is expected to grow to over 23 million over the next two decades. It is growing fastest in Latin America and Asia. Official publications include *Church News*, a weekly 16-page newspaper, and the *Ensign*, a monthly magazine.

The Mormon Church collects at least \$6 billion a year from its members, and generates at least another \$5 billion in sales from its various business enterprises. Its total church assets exceed \$30 billion. (At least 100 companies are controlled by the Mormon Church, and some estimate its total annual revenues in excess of \$20 billion! The church also owns 18 radio stations in the U.S.) Part of the Church's income goes to operate an elaborate internal welfare system so its members avoid any governmental assistance. The Mormon Church also has a 58,000-plus missionary force working in more than 160 nations in 102 languages. The Church's Provo, Utah, 26-acre Missionary Training Center receives 500 new missionaries a week into its 3-9 week intensive missionary training program. (All boys, once they turn 19, are expected to dedicate two years of their lives to missionary service.) Fielding missionaries is a \$500 million per year effort and currently reaps more than 300,000 new converts each year. Nevertheless, only about 46% of Mormons attend a church meeting at least once a month. The clean-cut image that Mormons have attained has been a major factor in the attractiveness of the Mormon Church to outsiders. They are forbidden to drink coffee, tea, and alcoholic beverages, and use tobacco products.

The Mormon Church (LDS) is organized so that one prophet leads the church. Beneath the prophet in authority is the Council of the Twelve Apostles. A third group of men are called the First and Second Councils of the Seventy. All of these men together are called the General Authorities. Local churches are called *Wards* or *Stake Centers* and meet for worship in what the Mormons call "meeting houses." The *Temples* are not for worship, but are used for ceremonies for the living and the dead. Less than ten percent of all LDS members are allowed to enter these structures.

As of year-end 2002, there were 114 operating temples of Mormon worldwide, with another 14 under construction or approved (albeit less elaborate than the 50 temples in existence at the end of 1997). Approximately 65,000 members must be in an immediate area to qualify for a temple. Temples are required for Mormon marriages and for proxy baptisms of ancestors. Most people assume Mormon temples are places of worship. This is not true. Only secret, occult rituals for the living and the

dead are performed there, and Mormons think they must perform them to have eternal life. It is tragic that over eleven million Mormons think they need secret handshakes, oaths, incantations, and rituals, which originated in occultic Scottish Rite, in order to be with God in heaven! (In the final years of Joseph Smith Jr.'s life, he became a "worshipful master" in the Masonic Lodge).

Below are the highlights of what Mormons believe concerning their source of authority, the Trinity, God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin, salvation, and heaven and hell:

2. Source of Authority.

Mormonism teaches that the canon of Scripture was not closed when the Bible was completed. They have three sources in addition to the Bible, all of which they believe contain God's revelations -- the *Book of Mormon* (changed in more than 4,000 places since 1830), *Doctrine and Covenants*, and the *Pearl of Great Price*. However, Mormons follow the teachings of these three books even when they contradict the Bible. For example, Mormonism teaches that the Bible is the Word of God "as far as it is translated correctly." Then whenever a Mormon belief contradicts Scripture, the Mormons say that particular part of Scripture is translated incorrectly, and that the correct translation is in one of the Mormon scriptures (*The Maze of Mormonism*, p. 131). Thereby, the Bible is rejected as the infallible Word of God.

3. Trinity.

Mormonism teaches polytheism (versus monotheism taught in the Bible), believing that the universe is inhabited by many gods who produce spirit children. Joseph Smith declared, "I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have always declared God to be a distinct personage. The Lord Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit. And these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 370).

4. God.

In Mormon theology the god of our planet is believed to have once been a man on another planet. Who through self-effort and the help of his own father-god, was appointed by a counsel of gods in the heavens to his high position as the god of planet Earth. And now has a physical, resurrected, glorified body. Mormonism teaches that through the atonement of Christ and by their good deeds and "holy" living, men can one day become gods, and with their multiplicity of "goddess wives," populate their own planets.

5. Christ.

Mormonism acknowledges the divinity of Christ, but as noted above, Mormon doctrine on what constitutes divinity falls seriously short of the Biblical standard. Mormonism teaches that The Lord Jesus Christ, Lucifer, and all the demons, as well as all mankind, are actually all spirit brothers and sisters, born in the spirit world as spirit babies to our man-god Heavenly Father and his goddess wives. Mormon leaders have consistently taught that God the Father ("Adam-god") had sexual relations on earth with Mary (his own spirit daughter), to produce the physical body of The Lord Jesus Christ. Early Mormon apostles also asserted that Christ was a polygamist, and that His wives included Mary and Martha (the sisters of Lazarus) and Mary Magdalene.

6. Holy Spirit.

In Mormonism, a distinction is drawn between the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit. As LDS Apostle Marion G. Romney stated: "The Holy Ghost is a person, a spirit,

the third member of the Godhead" (*Ensign*, May 1977, pp. 43-44). The sixth LDS prophet, Joseph F. Smith, explains that the Holy Spirit is not a person but rather an impersonal force. He says, "You may call it the Spirit of God, you may call it the influence of God's intelligence, you may call it the substance of his power; no matter what it is called, it is the spirit of intelligence that permeates the universe" (*Mormon Doctrine*, McConkie, pp. 752-753).

7. Sin.

In Mormon theology, it is not quite clear how the first humans, Adam and Eve, came to live on this earth and received bodies, but somehow they did and began the process of human procreation, whereby bodies are produced for their spirit children. But at the very beginning of the process of human generation, sin entered necessarily. The earthly bodies of Adam and Eve were intended to be immortal tabernacles for their spirits, "but it was necessary for them to possess through mortality and be redeemed through the sacrifice made by The Lord Jesus Christ that the fullness of life might come." Therefore, they disobeyed God's commands. Since the fall of man was necessary, it became necessary for men to disobey God in order to do His will. Adam's fall, thereby, was a fall "upward". Concerning the transmission of sin to Adam's posterity, Mormons take a negative position -- they believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression. Having rejected the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of sin, Latter Day Saints likewise repudiate the transmission of inherent corruption or original sin.

8. 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; according to Mormonism, only Christ's blood shed in the Garden of Gethsemane atones for personal sin. Besides faith in Christ, complete and permanent repentance of all sin as well as many good works are required. 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.

9. Heaven and Hell.

Mormonism teaches that there are three degrees of glory: Celestial (for good Mormons able to cease sinning in this lifetime, Terrestrial (for good people who do not comply with all the teachings of Mormonism), and Telestial (for those who have lived unclean earthly lives). Mormonism teaches that there is a hell, but only for the "sons of perdition," a very small number of souls that cannot be redeemed. According to Mormonism, then, the vast majority of mankind will be "saved," though it should be obvious that no one will make it to the Celestial Kingdom. [Blacks used to be totally out of the equation: "Black people are black because of their misdeeds in the pre-existence" (*Three Degrees of Glory*, LDS Apostle Melvin J. Ballard, p. 21); "The Negro is an unfortunate man. He has been given a black skin. But that is nothing compared with that greater handicap. He is not permitted to receive the priesthood and the ordinances of the temple, necessary to prepare men and women to enter into and enjoy a fullness of glory in the Celestial Kingdom" (Elder George E. Richards). In 1978, however, the Mormon Church announced that God had lifted his curse from the African race.

10. Temple Rituals.

A typical temple ceremony would take place as follows: "The ritual began in a small cubicle where we had to strip completely. We then put on 'the shield,' a poncho with a hole for the head, but open on the sides (similar to a hospital gown). We went through a series of 'washings and anointing', as various parts of our bodies were touched by elderly temple workers who mumbled appropriate incantations over them. Our Mormon underwear, 'the garments,' are said to have powers to protect us from 'the evil one.' It had occult markings, which were so 'sacred' that we were instructed to burn them when the garments wore out. The endowment ceremony mocked all doctrines held to by Biblical Christianity, and Christian pastors were portrayed as servants of Satan. We had to swear many blood oaths, promising we would forfeit our lives if we weren't faithful, or if we revealed any of the secrets revealed to us in the temple ceremonies. We were made to pretend by grotesque gestures to cut our throats, chests, and abdomens, indicating how we would lose our lives. We were never told who would kill us! The inference was, and history testifies to, that it would be the Mormon priesthood." (Testimony of a former Mormon). [Note: The blood oaths and portrayal of Christian pastors were removed in April of 1990, despite the fact that the ordinance was purported to have been given originally by a revelation and was never to be changed].

Lecture 10: (c) Christian Science

Introduction

The movement known as Christian Science is a religion "emphasizing divine healing as practiced by The Lord Jesus Christ." It is officially known as *The Church of Christ, Scientist* (CCS) (with headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts), founded in 1879 by the much married Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy (1821-1910). It is one of the more sophisticated modern cults, attracting many intellectuals. Estimated membership was about 350,000 in the 1930s with approximately 2,500 branch churches, societies, and college organizations in more than 50 countries worldwide. Estimates suggest that membership has fallen to well under 100,000 at the present time. While the branches are democratic in government, they all conform to the rules laid down in Mary Baker Eddy's *Manual of The Mother Church* (1895); church affairs are now overseen by a self-perpetuating board of five people.

Under the leadership of Board of Directors Chairman Virginia Harris, the CCS has embarked on an aggressive, multi-faceted marketing program designed to mainstream itself and to attract new members. For example, the CCS is finding new ways to promote itself in light of our society's current interest in self-awareness, spirituality, mind/body connections, alternative medicine, and women's issues.

Mrs. Eddy was chronically sick growing up, with many ailments including paralysis, hysteria, seizures and convulsions. At 22, she married her first of three husbands, George Glover, who died within 6 months from yellow fever. Following Glover's death, she began to be involved in mesmerism (hypnosis) and the occult practices of spiritualism and clairvoyance (Ruth Tucker, *Another Gospel*, p. 152). Still ill, she married Daniel Patterson in 1853, a dentist and homeopathic practitioner. It was during this time she met mental healer Phineas P. Quimby (1802-1866), whose influence would shape her belief of Christian Science. Quimby believed that illness and disease could be cured through positive thoughts and healthy attitudes, by changing one's beliefs about the illness. She claimed that Quimby cured her; she suddenly improved, but later the symptoms returned (*Another Gospel*, p. 155).

After Quimby's death in 1866, Mrs. Eddy determined to carry on his work. She had developed a "psychic dependence" on Quimby, drawing on his spiritual presence, claiming even visitations by his apparition. Eddy "reached the scientific certainty that all causation rests with the Mind, and that every effect is a mental phenomena." Eddy took Quimby's teachings one step further, claiming that sickness, death, and even our physical bodies do *not* exist, but are only *imagined*. Based on this absurdity, Mary Baker Eddy formulated her unique interpretations of Scripture upon which Christian Science was founded (and recorded in Eddy's 1875 book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. (In 2001, the ten millionth copy of *Science and Health* was sold). In essence, Christian Science is a revival of ancient Pantheism. [Eddy later published 16 other books, including *Retrospection and Introspection* (1891), which tells of her own experience of discovering, practicing, and teaching the "science" of Christian healing].

The event that Mrs. Eddy claimed as the inauguration of Christian Science occurred in February of 1866. She claimed to have had a near fatal fall on icy pavement, but was instantly healed when "the healing Truth dawned upon my senses," and the

divine healing ministry was born (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 24; *Science and Health*, p. 107). Testimony from her attending physician as well as other correspondence from Mrs. Eddy at the time strongly dispute Mrs. Eddy's "official" version of those events (Anthony Hoekema, *Christian Science*, pp. 12-13).

Healing became a major distinctive of Christian Science. According to Eddy Baker, the central fact of the Bible is the superiority of spiritual over physical power. The spiritual superiority is evident in other ways than healing. Telepathy is practiced in Christian Science treatment, and may be considered a form of psychic healing. Christian Science claims to prove through the healing of disease and other difficulties that the understanding of God and his spiritual creation is as effective now as it was in The Lord Jesus Christ' time. Its adherents, therefore, rely on "divine law" in times of sickness instead of resorting to medical and other material means. Christian Scientists do not use doctors, medicine, or immunizations. Christian Science Practitioners are used to "help people through the false reality of illness." Instead, proper prayer and training are employed to battle the "non-reality" of illness. (The right of Christian Science parents to withhold medical treatment from their children has many times been challenged in court.)

Publications

Publications of the Christian Science Publishing Society include the *Christian Science Quarterly*, containing Bible lessons for daily study; *The Christian Science Journal*, a monthly magazine; *Christian Science Sentinel*, a weekly magazine; *The Christian Science Monitor*, a daily newspaper; and *The Herald of Christian Science*. In the 1980s, the group expanded into other media, producing both radio and television news programming. Their venture into cable-television operations was ended in 1992, when it was discovered "that the church had secretly transferred \$46.5 million from endowments and pension funds to help cover huge losses on the 'Monitor Channel,' which had lost over \$325 million" (*Chicago Tribune*, 1/27/93, p. 2). [Additionally, there were losses of \$36 million and the resulting termination of *World Monitor*, a newspaper begun in 1988. *The Christian Science Monitor* is said to be losing \$13 million annually (Martin Gardner, *The Healing Revelations of Mary Baker Eddy*, p. 218).]

Instead of preachers (the CCS has no ordained clergy), Christian Science's Sunday services consist mainly of prescribed readings from the Bible, followed by interpretive readings from *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (which Eddy thought was divinely inspired. "I should blush to write of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* as I have, were it of human origin and I apart from God its author; but [since] I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of heaven in Divine Metaphysics, I cannot be super-modest of the Christian Science Textbook."). Eddy's "Scientific Statement of Being" (read every week from every Christian Science pulpit) begins with, "There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter," and ends with, "Therefore, man is not material; he is spiritual." Wednesday meetings include testimonies of healing from the congregation. Readers, both men and women, are elected from the membership to conduct the services. Practitioners, also both men and women, devote full time to the work of "spiritual healing."

Mrs. Eddy presented Christian Science as a scientific system of healing based upon spiritual laws God (allegedly) had revealed to her. She taught these laws must be followed -- without deviation -- if a believer wishes to practice Christian Science with

consistent success. She taught Christian Science cannot be mixed with any other doctrine or spiritual healing system, and, thereby, it is incompatible with medicine. Eddy also believed in "Malicious Animal Magnetism" (MAM), which is negative mental energy or power, on the level of black magic. "Reading Rooms" are local Christian Science libraries where members go to read Eddy's works to aid their spiritual evolvment.

Christian Science Beliefs

Christian Scientists call themselves Christians, but their beliefs deviate from Biblical Christianity on nearly every central Doctrine. Below are the highlights of what Christian Scientists believe concerning their source of authority, the Godhead, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Resurrection, sin and salvation, heaven and hell, man's destiny, and disease and death:

1. Source of Authority.

Mary Baker Eddy claimed the Bible was her "only textbook" and "only authority." Yet she also said the Bible has thousands of errors -- 30,000 in the Old Testament and 300,000 in the New Testament. Christian Scientists believe that Mrs. Eddy's discovery of Divine Science is the "final revelation" from God. They claim *Science and Health* is divinely inspired (even though it has been proven to contain numerous plagiarism and revisions). -- *Science and Health* is the "first book" which has been "uncontaminated by human hypothesis" (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist and Miscellany*, p. 115; *Science and Health*, pp. 99, 139, 456-457). One is only supposed to read the Bible if they have Eddy's "key" in hand, so as to find out what a passage means. The implication is that God couldn't make Himself plain, but has to have Mary Baker Eddy interpret what He says. With this in mind, the world was, in effect, left to grope in darkness until Mrs. Eddy came on the scene.

2. Language.

Christian Scientists have given Bible terms allegorical, metaphysical definitions that are completely different from normal usage. Everything is spiritualized to the point that the physical no longer exists. New meanings have also been assigned to many traditional theological doctrines. (For example: "Adam was not an actual person who was created by God and fell into sin.' Adam' means error; a falsity; the belief in 'original sin,' sickness, and death; evil; the opposite of good.")

3. Trinity.

Christian Science clearly repudiates the Trinitarian Godhead: "The theory of three persons in one God (that is, a personal Trinity or Tri-unity) suggests polytheism, rather than the one ever-present I Am" (*Science and Health*, p. 256). Instead, "Life, Truth, and Love constitute the triune Person called God ... God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter" (*Science and Health*, p. 331-332). Christian Science teaches that the Biblical concept of the Trinity suggests "heathen gods" (*Science and Health*, p. 152). God is thus viewed as an impersonal "Divine Principle," a conception of one's mind (*Science and Health*, pp. 361, 469). On page 465 in another of Mrs. Eddy's "authoritative" books, entitled *Miscellaneous Writings*, she wrote: "God is incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite, mind, spirit, soul, principle, life, truth, love," but devoid of any personality. To the contrary, the Bible teaches that God is a triune, personal, transcendent Being who created "the world and all things in it" (Act 17:24). He is not a pantheistic all in all. He is holy and just, as well as love. God created and governs the universe, including man (Acts 17:24-27).

4. The Lord Jesus Christ Christ.

Christian Science denies that the incarnation of Christ was the fullness of deity dwelling in human flesh, denies the perfection of the man The Lord Jesus Christ, and attempts to explain away the historical death and bodily resurrection of The Lord Jesus Christ (*Science and Health*, pp. 336, 29, 332, 53, 398, 313, 593; *Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 201) Christian Science believes that Mary's conception of The Lord Jesus Christ was spiritual -- on pages 332 and 347 of *Science and Health*, the virgin birth of Christ is described and explained: "The Lord Jesus Christ was the offspring of Mary's self-conscious communion with God. ... Mary's conception of him was spiritual." Christian Science believes that the names "The Lord Jesus Christ" and "Christ" do not refer to the same person - - that The Lord Jesus Christ is the human man and Christ is the "divine idea" (i.e., "dualism"). They teach that the spiritual (good) cannot dwell in material bodies because they are evil; thus The Lord Jesus Christ could not have been both God and man. To the contrary, the Bible teaches that The Lord Jesus Christ is not the divine idea of God but was God uniquely manifested in the flesh, truly God and truly man, one divine Person with two indivisible natures, who is the only Savior and the only truth and Lord (John 1:1-3,14; Col. 2:9; Philippians. 2:6-7; John 14:6). Christian Science believes that The Lord Jesus Christ was *not* God and the only way to heaven, but only the "wayshower" (cf. John. 20:31; 1 John. 4:2, 3).

Christian Science not only denies that The Lord Jesus Christ is God incarnate, it also denies that The Lord Jesus Christ is one Person with two natures -- fully God and fully man. Christian Science presents The Lord Jesus Christ in terms of a Gnostic duality: "The spiritual Christ was infallible: The Lord Jesus Christ as material manhood was not Christ" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 84). "Christ as the true spiritual ideal, is the ideal of God now and forever ..." (*Science and Health*, p. 361). "The Christ is incorporeal, spiritual ..." while, "The corporeal [physical] man The Lord Jesus Christ was human only (*Science and Health*, p 332). Yet "matter is mortal error ... matter is the unreal and temporal" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 21). So what Christian Science actually concludes is that the physical humanity of The Lord Jesus Christ was an illusion, "as it seemed to mortal view" (*Science and Health*, p. 315).

Concerning the blood atonement of The Lord Jesus Christ Christ: "The material blood of The Lord Jesus Christ was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed upon 'the accursed tree,' than when it was flowing in his veins ..." (*Science and Health*, p. 25). Christian Science teaches that the death of The Lord Jesus Christ for sin was a "man-made" theory, and that The Lord Jesus Christ was alive in the tomb, demonstrating the "power of Spirit to overrule mortal, material sense" (*Science and Health*, p. 44). Eddy states, "Christ was not crucified ... The Lord Jesus Christ, being the man who possessed the Christ consciousness, was the one who went to the cross and who appeared to die." Thus, according to the theology of Christian Science, the Bible only appears to say that The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross and His body was laid in the tomb; it must instead be understood that The Lord Jesus Christ actually never died, but was rather in the tomb denying death's reality!

5. Holy Spirit.

Christian Science denies that the Holy Spirit is a personal being. It teaches that the Holy Spirit is Christian Science. -- "This Comforter I understand to be Divine

- Science" (*Science and Health*, p. 55). It is the unfolding of the thoughts and infinite mind of God (pp. 502-503). [cf. John. 16:13-14] Thus, God, the Holy Spirit, cannot indwell a person (*Science and Health*, p. 336).
6. The Resurrection.
It is obvious that if The Lord Jesus Christ never physically died on the cross to atone for sins that mankind cannot commit (*Science and Health*, pp. 45-46), then the resurrection must also have a unique meaning in Christian Science. Eddy explains, "When The Lord Jesus Christ reproduced his body after its burial, he revealed the myth or material falsity of evil; its powerlessness to destroy good and the omnipotence of the Mind that knows this: he also showed forth the error of nothingness of supposed life in matter, and the great somethingness of the good we possess, which is of Spirit, and immortal" (*Miscellaneous Writings*, p. 201). The Lord Jesus Christ resurrection was thus the manifestation of the error of evil. He demonstrated that sin and death are illusions and that if one wishes to rid themselves of these illusions, they only need to deny their reality.
 7. Sin.
Christian Science denies the existence of all matter, including man's physical body. They say that man is "incapable of sin, sickness, and death." They claim sin, sickness, and death are the "effects of error," thereby denying the reality of sin. Bottom line, to Christian Science, there is no sin (*Science and Health*, p. 447). This is a consistent deduction and fundamental principle of the Christian Science system -- namely, God is all and God is good, and since the real man has never departed from his original state of perfection, he is not in need of salvation. He is saved now and reposing in the bosom of the Father. He has always been saved -- that is, as God's idea of the expression of the mind, man is forever held in the divine consciousness. And since sin and evil have no reality, all ideas of sin and evil are illusions. They are the product of the mortal mind. Hence, it is a sense of sin which is sinful because of the illusory product of the mortal mind. They say that man's real problem is the *belief* of sin, and that "Christ came to destroy the belief of sin." [Eddy writes in *Miscellaneous Writings* in the question and answer section: "If there is no sin, why did The Lord Jesus Christ come to save sinners?" She answers, "The Lord Jesus Christ came to seek and to save such as believe in the reality of the unreal; to save them from this false belief; that they might lay hold of eternal Life ..." (p. 63). In other words, The Lord Jesus Christ came to save mankind from the false belief that sin is real! The Lord Jesus Christ saving work was to exemplify the fact that death is unreal, that sin is only an illusion or false belief, and that to deny its existence is the ultimate task of each person.]
 8. Salvation.
Since Christian Scientists do not believe that sin is real, they, therefore, see no need for salvation in The Lord Jesus Christ Christ. Notwithstanding, Christian Scientists still teach a salvation based on works -- and contrary to even their own teachings, a salvation through victory over *suffering* and *temptation*.
 9. Hell.
Christian Science denies the existence of hell and eternal punishment, and, therefore, there is no devil (*Science and Health*, p. 469). Hell is defined as "mortal belief; error; lust; remorse; hatred; revenge; sin; sickness; death." They believe that hell is a self-imposed "mental anguish," emanating from the guilt of one's *imagined* sin.
 10. Man's Destiny.

Christian Science teaches that since God is all good and nothing that is real exists outside God, then sin, sickness, and death are mortal error or an illusion. Christ, as the Truth, therefore came to set man free from these false beliefs by His teachings and example (*Science and Health*, pp. 473, 475, 108). Christian Science denies the penal, substitutionary atonement of Christ, saying, "The material blood of The Lord Jesus Christ was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed on 'the accursed tree,' than when it was flowing in his veins as he went daily about His Father's business" (*Science and Health*, p.25). "The Lord Jesus Christ taught the way of Life by demonstration. There is but one way to heaven, harmony, and Christ in Divine Science shows us this way" (*Science and Health*, p. 242). "Universal salvation rests on progression and probation ... No final judgment awaits mortals ..." (*Science and Health*, p. 291)

11. Disease and Death.

Christian Scientists claim that since organic disease does not exist, "the cause of all so-called disease is mental" [i.e., 'the belief in sin is thereby the cause of it'], "a mistaken belief" (*Science and Health*, p. 377). They say that since our physical bodies do not exist, disease and death are only illusions (*Science and Health*, pp. 348,386). To the contrary, the Bible teaches that sin, sickness, and evil are not an illusion, but a result of man's willful choice to rebel against a Holy God, and death (both physical and the spiritual eternal separation from God) is the result of sin (Romans. 3:10, 23; 5:12-14; 1 John 1:8-10). They believe they have restored Christ's principles of divine healing through their practices of mental healing; i.e., the healing performed by Christian Science involves helping a person to deny the reality of his illness, and thereby, any failure to heal is due to a person's inability to overcome his belief. Mary Baker Eddy claimed to have this power of healing (called Divine Science), though she never provided any tangible proof of it. Whereas the Christian Science approach to healing may help psychosomatic illnesses, it has been scientifically demonstrated that it is not effective with real illness. In fact, studies comparing the cumulative death rates of practicing Christian Scientists with control groups have shown significantly higher death rates among the Christian Scientists (*Journal of American Medical Association*, September 22/29, 1989, pp 1657-58; and *Morbidity Weekly Report*, August 23, 1991, pp. 579-582).

12. The "Gospel" of Christian Science.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who possessed the Christ consciousness as do all men to a lesser extent, went to the cross, not to bring about forgiveness of sin, for sin is an illusion, but rather to demonstrate that death is an illusion. On the morning of the resurrection, the supposed physical body of The Lord Jesus Christ was reproduced in its original illusionary form, for all matter is illusion, and thereby demonstrated to mankind that all could do the same by denying the reality of sin and death.

The Lord Jesus Christ' "seeming" death on the cross was not intended to pay for our sins, but to prove the unreality of sin, disease, and death. The Bible is full of mistakes. The Lord Jesus Christ' words were recorded by "dull disciples ... in a decaying language," and must be spiritually interpreted through Christian Science.

To put it another way: "The Lord Jesus Christ was laid down as the result of apparent death, into a fictitious tomb, in an unreal body, to make an unnecessary atonement for sins that had never been a reality and had been committed in an

imaginary body, and that He saves from non-existing evil those headed toward an imaginary hell, the false fancy of an erroneous Mortal Mind" (J.K. VanBaalen, *The Chaos of Cults*).

Conclusion

Christian Science offers some real enticements -- a "spiritually scientific" method for healing, victory over life's circumstances, and guaranteed salvation. All one has to do to receive these blessings is to study Eddy's writings and obey them to the letter. She was God's messenger to this age and her writings are considered infallible. Just obey her teaching, and learn to think as she thought, and you will be victorious.

The physical dangers of Christian Science are obvious. Since they are taught that learning about their bodies is spiritually harmful, Christian Scientists are ill equipped to understand the symptoms of illness. They often suffer needlessly from treatable ailments and neglect life-threatening conditions that could be cured if treated in their early stages.