

## CULTS

From a Christian perspective, a cult is a teaching group or movement which has emerged from Christendom who claim to be the true faith, but they deviate from orthodoxy. They normally demand a high level of commitment to a leader or controlling group and require members to be active in proselytising.

All cults claim to have a divinely inspired leader (past or present) and to have discovered exclusive extra-Biblical truth. Indoctrination results from manipulative or inappropriate control of their followers, and can border on brainwashing. This results in members being absorbed into a tightly-knit group who cling to one another and the leader in fear and insecurity. Most cults camouflage their real beliefs until people are “hooked”. They nearly always display hostility towards the church, often capitalising on popular prejudices against conventional churches.

Departure from the faith is prophesied in the Bible to occur in the last days (1 Tim 4:1,2 ; 2 Tim 3:5). There are over 60 major cults with various beliefs and many hundreds of small groups. Satan, who inspires these systems, has developed something appealing to all types of people.

The way to tell a counterfeit – it’s the difference that makes the difference!

There are three areas to consider with each cult – their history, their beliefs, and some ways we can approach them with the gospel.

“Cultus”: any religious ritual or observance. Secondary meaning, “A teaching group or movement which has emerged from Christendom. Claiming to be the true faith they deviate from orthodoxy. They normally demand a high level of commitment to a leader or controlling group and require members to be active in proselytising.

Most cults camouflage their real beliefs until people are “hooked”. They nearly always develop a hostility towards the church with an abundance of evidence. They work on popular prejudices against conventional churches. Departure from the faith is prophesied in the Bible to occur in the last days (1 Tim 4:1,2 ; 2 Tim 3:5).

There are over 60 major cults with various beliefs and hundreds of small groups. Aggressive in proselytising, well drilled enthusiasts have been responsible for drawing millions away from the truth into their systems. The printed page, radio, and T.V. are used extensively to advance their views or acceptance.

The total missionary force of the whole church (R.C. and Protestant) is about 90,000. The J.W.’s boast about 360,000 trained workers who systematically and continually go out to seek converts. The Mormons have in excess of 20,000 full time missionaries.

It is interesting to note that major deviations from orthodox belief occurred just after a spiritual awakening in U.S.A.

1830 - Mormons

1840 - S.D.A.’s

1827 - Walter Scott: Church of Christ

1878 - J.W.’s

1830 - Mary “exalted.”

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Satan, who inspires these systems, has developed something appealing to all types of people. Everything from T.M. for the atheist to the local church for evangelicals.

**Some apologetics before looking at some of the specific cults:**

## **Has the Bible been changed?**

It is true that the Bible has been translated into English dozens of times. It has also been translated into over 1500 languages. But all of these translations use the same Hebrew and Greek text. That hasn't changed!

The renowned Hebrew scholar, Henry Green said of the Bible: "It may be safely said that no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted." The dead sea scrolls prove this. They are nearly 1000 years older than other Hebrew manuscripts yet are virtually identical. The Hebrew scribes were fanatics about accuracy. They employed men to count every letter to make sure there were no mistakes.

## **Is The New Testament Reliable?**

Sir Frederick Kenyon, former Director of the British Museum and an expert on ancient manuscripts wrote, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established".

Four historical records of the life and teaching of Jesus with no evidence of the author's collaboration in order to fabricate a story. Each gospel stands alone as an independent witness to the events, while at the same time verifying the others.

The events which are recorded in the gospels were not done in secret. Many of those who opposed Jesus Christ and later became enemies of the church could not deny the historical facts of His life and miracles, even though they desperately wanted to! This is especially true of the account of the resurrection.

## **The time between the events and the written records**

Even though the gospels were written many years after the events, the apostles would have no problem writing an account of them. They were recording amazing happenings which could not easily be forgotten. Actually, the time-lag lends weight to the validity of the gospels, as lies become distorted and change in the face of unforeseen questioning, but the truth of an eye-witness report never changes.

Other recognized history books from the same period have far less evidence to support their historicity than the New Testament. For example, there are only 7 copies of "History" by Pliny the Younger, written at the same time as the N.T. The earliest copy available today only dates back to 850 A.D. which is 750 years after the original was written. The N.T. manuscripts in existence today (some date back as far as 125 A.D.) number in excess of 5,300 copies (in part or in whole).

There are some who find it hard to believe that the apostles could remember the exact words of Jesus over the period of 30 to 60 years before writing them down. However:

- a) There is no reason why these sayings could not have first been written down in a temporary form.
- b) The writers did not have to rely on their own memories alone.
- c) The apostles were constantly preaching, teaching and conversing about the things Jesus said and did, reinforcing their memories.
- d) The common way for rabbis (teachers) to instruct their disciples at that time was by means of memory. Even today Eastern people show a great aptitude for verbatim memorisation.
- e) The Holy Spirit of God brought to their remembrance the things they heard and saw (John 14:26).

## **Who is Jesus Christ?**

### **Jesus existed in history**

F. F. Bruce, former Rylands professor of Biblical criticism at the University of Manchester says: "Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth,' but they do not do so on the ground of

historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the 'Christ-myth' theories."

### **The resurrection of Jesus Christ**

#### ***Choose one of the alternatives:-***

1. Jesus didn't die while on the cross. After 3 cold nights in the tomb, He revived, pushed over a two ton stone, overpowered the 12 or more trained Roman soldiers, and escaped!
  2. The disciples overpowered the battle toughened Roman soldiers, stole the body of Jesus and hid it. They were then willing to suffer severe persecution and death for what they knew was a lie, without one of them renouncing his belief.
  3. The Jewish or Roman authorities moved Christ's body to another burial site. They kept this secret even when they desperately tried to disprove the resurrection in order to stamp out Christianity. (Why didn't they produce the body to settle the argument?)
  4. The disciples went to the wrong tomb by mistake. (Again, why didn't the authorities produce the body to prove the disciples wrong?)
  5. The disciples, fearful and dejected, suddenly and for no other reason, boldly faced persecution and death to preach that Jesus was risen from the dead, all the time knowing that the tomb with the body of Jesus in it was only a few hundred yards from where they were standing!
  6. Jesus did rise from the dead as He predicted He would.
- \* Many were eye witnesses (on one occasion over 500 people).
  - \* The empty tomb with the grave clothes left folded.
  - \* N.T. documents are reliable (no evidence of fabrication).
  - \* Impact on the fearful disciples.
  - \* His body was never produced.
  - \* Millions of Christians have experienced Jesus Christ in their lives.

## **1. New Age Movement**

The New Age Movement, though not a formal religion headed up by a leader or governing body, is nevertheless a distinct religious movement, based on a similar world-view, and holding similar beliefs.

**1. Pantheism** - The new-ager believes that God is not separate from creation as creator, but IS creation. They believe that all humanity is one with creation, and God is the unifying force in all things.

**2. Humanism** - According to new age thinking, the answer to mankind's problems is to discover the "divine" within. They believe there are many possible paths to find "god" inside you. When all humanity tunes into the "god" inside them, a new age of peace and prosperity will result.

**3. Occult-Mysticism** - Many new age people believe in channelling (becoming a spirit-medium) and allowing spirit-guides (entities) to assist in finding the "god" within. These spirit-guide are demonic spirits.

**4. Reincarnation** - Most new-agers believe in reincarnation. (See next page)

**5. Cosmic Christ** - New age teaching presents Jesus Christ as a good man who had the "Christ-principle" for His time. He was a "world teacher" and an "ascended master" just like other famous religious leaders. They believe the same Christ-principle has now passed on to others who will usher in the new world order, the "Age of Aquarius."

#### **The Christian's response to the New Age beliefs:**

1. God is creator and therefore He is separate from His creation. If God is “in creation” (part of it), who created everything? Humans are not gods, but were made in God’s image, sharing some of God’s attributes.
2. Humanity’s union with God is not one of a shared being (that we are one by nature) but of relationship. The problem with humanity is not ignorance of the “god” within us, but of a broken relationship. Tuning into “god” by methods such as meditation, chanting and channelling does not change the sinful (selfish) nature of a person. Finding God is not through knowledge (using techniques) but by being reconciled with a Holy God through the cross of Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ is not one of many “Christs,” He is unique. He is the Creator-God who became one of us so that through His death we might “become children of God.” Though some may claim Jesus was one of many “Christs” who have shared their enlightenment with those of their day, Jesus did not see Himself that way. He claimed to be a unique person who had come from heaven. He did not merely show the way or teach the truth. He said “I am the way and the truth” (John 14:6).
4. The new age will only come through the personal return of Jesus Christ. Jesus prophesied that many would come claiming to be “The Christ” but He warned everyone not to follow them. He promised to personally return to the earth, and set up a kingdom of peace and righteousness.
5. Many new-agers are disillusioned, as their beliefs are not working in the world or in their own lives. Only Jesus Christ has the power to set mankind free!

## 2. The Eastern Cults

### *Why the trend towards eastern thought?*

1. **New attitude to intolerance** - Religious intolerance in the mind of the 20th century Westerners, is almost an unforgivable sin. It is married to a loss of any sense of absolute authority in the areas of truth and morality. Hinduism and other eastern beliefs are able to absorb most other religions, making them an attractive basis for a philosophy to unite a divided world
2. **Rationalism doesn’t satisfy** - rationalism only dehumanises people to being biochemical machines. The West’s existential response to the scientific and analytical world view has revived interest in mysticism. Experience is central to Eastern religions making them attractive.
3. **Disillusionment with materialism** - Eastern religions emphasise the need to find inner contentment and have past and present examples of people who have renounced worldly possessions and lived an ascetic life-style.

### THE EASTERN MIND

The western ‘scientific’ mind works on the principle of analysis and classification by means of reason. Eastern thinking however, does not separate the one who knows, from what is known. Scientific knowledge of this type is rejected. To the eastern mind, there is a realm beyond reason.

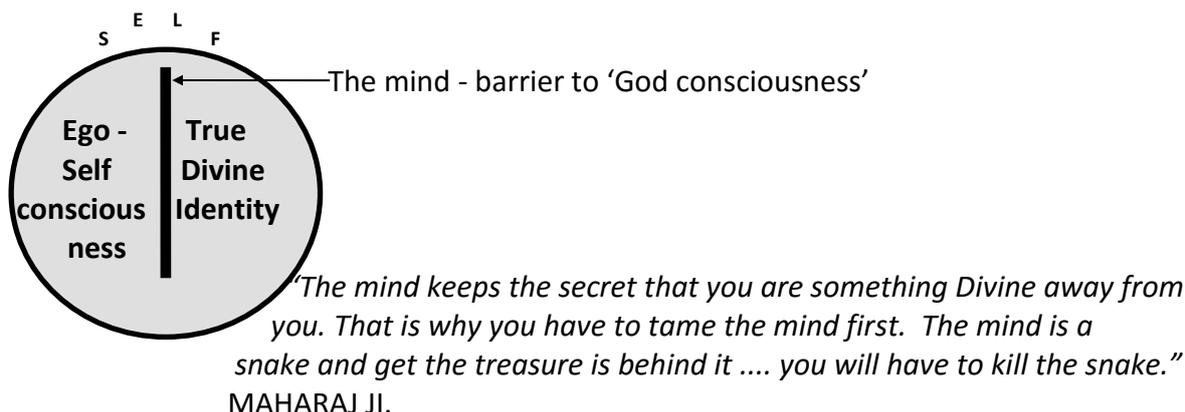
#### 1. PANTHEISTIC VIEW OF GOD

God is not apart from the material world, rather, God and the material world are one and the same. God is the sum total of all there is. You do not discover or know or relate to a “God out there” but, by a process of ‘self-realisation’ or ‘God-realisation’ or ‘development of God-consciousness’ one **discovers his/her own inner divinity**. Various techniques are used to achieve the self-deifying goal from simple meditation to chanting or other eastern disciplines.

#### 2. SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF GOD

For many today, a thing is true only if it **feels** right. “What is true for you may not be true for me.” This attitude has been the subtle preparation of mind which Satan has employed to open the doors for the flood of eastern beliefs to enter and find acceptance. The mind is not the ultimate

guide to reality, but intuition and feeling must be the judge. The mind is therefore not only ignored by actively dethroned by an earnest follower of an eastern cult seeking enlightenment.



The mind is not a friend, but a foe in the search for truth. Ignorance becomes a virtue ("sacred ignorance" - Zen) which is achieved by attuning to the "psychic self" and thus bypassing the mind. Experience is also "We can of course never decide definitely whether a person is really "enlightened"....or whether he merely imagines it. We have no criteria for this." CARL JUNG (Zen Buddhism.)

### **SATAN'S SUBTLE WORK.**

"For we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan's strategy is obvious. In the "age of Aquarius" people are made to believe that objective truth can be eliminated as unworthy of consideration. Because God is considered the sum total of all there is, distinctions between right and wrong become meaningless. Those who free themselves from the yoke of a personal, moral "God out there", become the victims of the merciless master "Karma". This treadmill, cause and effect unbreakable system involving reincarnation creates such monstrosities as the cast system in India and the prohibition on killing or even offending animals in a country so poverty stricken. Satan's age old trap is just as effective today. "You will be like God, knowing good and evil." Mystical eastern cults reduce God to an impersonal, controllable and safe level. God is stripped of His authority and man is relieved of his accountability. With the mind neutralised, the next step is to silence the guilty conscience by explaining sin as simply a matter of innocent ignorance as opposed to self-will.

### **BELIEFS CONTRASTED**

#### **a. CREATION**

In Genesis 1, God gives names to that which He makes (earth, seas) and pronounces an objective evaluation of the finished work - "It is good". This shows that God is not identified with creation, but is distinct from it. He is the I AM of Exodus 3 : 14, indicating independent self-existence and self consciousness.

Eastern thought however, is quite opposite. There is no concept of the self-consciousness of a separate "God out there" whatever. Brahman makes no decisions and has no purpose - indeed he cannot, for he is not a personal god.

#### **b. SIN**

In Genesis man was made in God's image as a self-conscious personal and responsible being, set out the rest of creation with a limited sovereignty, vice regent to God. Man's abuse of moral freedom brought a loss of personal fellowship with God. Sin brings death.

In the eastern mind, however, man is just a part of the oneness of the universal soul. No moral failure can separate man from what is in their view, a oneness of essence. Sin is essentially ignorance which is overcome by attaining enlightenment.

#### **c. SALVATION**

Salvation for an eastern thinker, is the experience of realising in a mystical way, the oneness of himself with all things. This is enlightenment. This experience cannot be verbalised but is close to all who seek it. Man finds his own salvation through personal discipline and effort.

#### **d. JESUS CHRIST**

Eastern religions give considerable attention to the appearance of incarnations of 'god' in history. These 'avatars' do not accomplish anything to secure salvation, but act as transmitters of enlightenment. This concept of 'avatars' or 'divine saviours' was developed fairly late in the history of eastern religion (after St. Thomas brought the gospel to India around 52AD). Some of the stories of the god Krishna are exact parallels of the gospel accounts of Jesus. There is even some thought that the name Krishna has derived from, or adapted to, the story of Christ! In the eastern view, a new 'avatar' is needed in every age. Satan's attack here is not on the truthfulness of the incarnation of Christ, but the uniqueness of His person.

#### **e. THE SCRIPTURES**

Eastern religion excludes the very idea of a verbal revelation of God. God can only be experienced, and so Scriptures can only describe the ways in which this experience can be sought.

Suzuki:- "External authority is rejected...absolute faith is placed in a man's own inner being." Where there is a conflict between Scripture and intuitional impulse, the impulse is the final authority.

#### **f. PRAYER AND MEDITATION**

The Christian is to address God as "Our Father, who art in heaven" (distinct and separate from the one praying.) The aim of Eastern meditation is not **on** God's person, but to meditate **into** his essence.

#### **g. LIFE AFTER DEATH**

At the heart of Eastern religion is belief in Karma and reincarnation. Compare Hebrews 9:27, John 9:1-3. They often justify it by Gal. 6:7.

#### **Hinduism**

Hinduism is the second oldest current religion behind Judaism (unless you include spiritism as a religion). It has been the source of all other major Asian religions. Modern scholarship has established that the earliest forms of the Hindu religion, which are found in their 'Rig Vidas' Scriptures, date back to about 1500 BC. The early form of Hinduism however, was basically a 'garden variety' polytheism similar to many other religions of the time, and has little resemblance to it's modern counterpart.

#### **Two Major tenants of Hinduism:**

1. The world is really "Brahman in disguise" - all matter, especially biological life, is merely a temporal and illusory manifestation of an impersonal, absolute, universal spirit 'Brahman'. Shiva ('the destroyer') and Vishnu ('the preserver') are two of the most powerful gods among a multitude of lesser deities than (and lower manifestations of) the absolute Brahman.

2. Hinduism holds to the assumption of reincarnation, the transmigration of souls, reborn into another bodily existence. Prior to about 1000 BC Hinduism held to a belief in a form of resurrection.

One of the most important features of Hindu belief and practice which has influenced the Western world is the veneration of the Guru. The 'Swami' is an enlightened master who is always a male who has progressed through many reincarnations and on the last part of his spiritual path. Gurus are esteemed by their devotees to the same degree that Christians honour Christ.

**Transcendental Meditation** - Maharishi Mahesh Yogi attained instant fame through being the Guru of the Beatles and was instrumental in leading over a million unsuspecting people into

Hinduism through the prayers and offerings during the initiation ceremony into the popular T.M. cult. He was commissioned by his dying Swami Brahmananda Saraswati to evolve a simple form of meditation that could be taught to anyone. After a 2 year retreat in the Himalayas he emerged with a Yoga technique called T.M. His new technique was not readily accepted in India so he decided to take it to USA, which he did in 1959. He found that Westerners were not interested in the way he presented it. Having obtained a degree in Physics in his earlier years he was able to reconstruct the image of T.M. in scientific terms, and this was met with an overwhelming response. By 1976 there were 700,000 people who had initiated into T.M., generating an amazing \$36 million, and it was growing at a rate of 30,000 new adherents per month. Now, in the Maharishi International University, Fairfield, Iowa, there are over 600 missionaries graduating per year. The goal of T.M.'s mission organisation "World Plan Executive Council" is to make T.M. available to every person in the world by establishing 3,600 "Science and Creative Intelligence training centres around the world. The aim is to have one teacher per every 1,000 people on the earth.

T.M. is presented as a scientifically proven and harmless technique to remove stress and anxiety, and empower people with new positive and creative energy. They present a significant amount of scientific data to show the positive physiological and psychological effects on a person who is meditating. Social benefits are also put forward. There is a veiling of any religious connotations. Once the person accepts and pays for the initiation, they must kneel before a picture of Maharishi's dead master, Swami Saraswati, make offerings to him as to God, and cannot receive a mantra to repeat until a hymn of praise and worship (a 'puja') is sung to Hindu deities.

**Hare Krishna** (ISKCON) is a world-wide group who worship Krishna, a manifestation of the Hindu god Vishnu by chanting his name over 1,000 times a day. Krishna is regarded by them as a personal saviour which is inconsistent with their continued pantheistic beliefs. There is evidence to suggest that the personal saviour aspect of the Krishna belief originated in South India around the time of the early church and St. Thomas' effective missionary endeavours there.

Devotees of Krishna differ from other forms of Hinduism in that they believe that Krishna is a higher form of the Hindu 'trinity' of gods (Brahman, Shiva and Vishnu), and is the Supreme Personality, the Lord, the Absolute truth. Rather than merging with Brahman, whom they say has only 78% of Krishna's attributes, the devotees of Hare Krishna look forward to a transcendental love and fellowship with a very personal god who includes the Brahman and who dwells in the heart of every person. Salvation for them is having a personal relationship with Krishna and this is attained through purification by means of a complete surrender in devotion to Krishna. As Krishna consciousness increases, so will the 'transcendental spiritual pleasure which surpasses any pleasure the material world can offer. As Christ is to Christians, so Krishna is to these devotees. To them he is their personal saviour.

Devotees must be reminded that their leaders esteem the Bible as Holy Scripture, and revere Jesus and His teachings. This may lead them to be open to your sharing of what the Bible says concerning the gospel. Krishna devotees normally have no problem agreeing with the concept of sin. Then Christ and Krishna can be compared as saviours from sin.

**Buddhism** grew out of Hinduism when Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) rejected the polytheistic beliefs of his faith. He was born in 563 BC as a prince to the king of ancient Bharata at the foot of the Himalayas. Seeing suffering around him he went on an ascetic pilgrimage in search of truth. He did not attain his goal and saw that his life of asceticism and self-torture was of no greater value than his previous life of pleasure as a prince. He then understood the importance of a 'middle way'. This doctrine of a middle way has appealed to Westerners, and can be seen played out in Miyagi of "The Karate Kid" and Splinter of "The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles". At Gaya near the village of Uruvella, while sitting under a fig tree. He claimed a revelation of 'four noble truths' that sets one free from the cruel bondage of reincarnation.

The four truths are:

- Life is full of sorrows - suffering marks all lives so incarnation is a curse
- The origin of suffering is ignorance. From ignorance proceeds a desire for material things
- A person can break the cycle of rebirths (reincarnation) by realising that the essence of all things (including the soul) is emptiness. To extinguish the consciousness of reality and accept reality as it is, without qualifications.
- The path that leads to the ceasing of suffering has eight steps - right views, aspirations, speech, conduct, mode of living (free from luxury), effort, awareness and concentration. Though nihilistic, the Buddhist sees the goal of a final pure life to end the cycles of reincarnations as idealistic.

**Zen Buddhism** (from the writings of D. T. Suzuki) seeks truth through meditation (Zazen - Za means sitting, Zen means meditation). Westerners who have rejected the Christian doctrines and culture have found this belief appealing. This form of meditation is performed through self-effort with the premise that he/she is a Buddha, and seeks to achieve 'satori' - the experiential realisation that all is one and that duality is an illusion of the mind. He affirms: 'Simple people conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so; God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him. In this absolute oneness of things, Zen establishes the foundation of its philosophy.'

## **RESPONDING TO EASTERN CULTS/RELIGIONS**

Every religious belief has in-built presuppositions. Houses built on poor foundations are insecure, and beliefs built on faulty presuppositions are equally invalid. The basic presuppositions behind all Eastern religious thinking are:

### **1. Reality is one**

According to Hinduism, Brahman is the highest being, the one single reality from which the universe of multiplicity springs. The Hindu scripture Upanishad says, 'That from which these beings are born, that in which born they live, and that into which they enter at their death is Brahman.' Brahman is God, being, awareness, and bliss.

**Response:** If reality is ultimately one, then there are no finite individuals. But to assert, 'reality is one' in a strictly monistic context would be senseless. If only God exists, who is God talking to? Pantheism is impossible. To affirm: 'God exists but I am not,' is self-contradictory since one must exist in order to make the statement.

Pantheists teach that man is deceived in thinking of his individual existence, if this be the case how could the Pantheist know that he is not mistaken when he thinks reality is one? If reality is one, relationship and religious experience would be impossible and meaningless. No relationship would exist in a single entity. If God alone exists, God and not the pantheist is having the experience.

### **2. Reality is illogical.**

Basic to all Eastern thinking is that reality is illogical and reason cannot lead to God. It is often asserted that 'God is greater than logic'. Buddha's advice to his disciples was, "Do not go by reasoning, nor by inferring, nor by argument." Writing on Zen Buddhism, Suzuki points out, 'Zen is one thing and logic another. When we fail to make this distinction and expect Zen to give us something logically consistent and intellectually illuminating, we altogether misinterpret the signification of Zen.'

**Response:** Pantheism cannot assert the infallibility of the divine mind and at the same time the fallibility of the human mind, if, as they claim, mankind is divine. If you ask a pantheist why he has rejected reason he will give you reasons for it!

### **3. The god in everyone is all-loving**

**Response:** Only a distinct being with a will and with personality can love. An impersonal force cannot feel love, nor express love in a practical way as did Jehovah in John 3:16.

**4. Mankind's basic problem is not sin (as defined by the Bible) but is ignorance** of his true identity as being one with the cosmic Divinity inside himself.

**Response:** Believing there is no personal God means there is no accountability to Him, and therefore no sin. Why then is it wrong to slowly, painfully murder a child? What do you call Hitler's atrocities - ignorance?

**5. The only way to know whether or not a certain path is the "truth" is to experience it**, and even then there is no criteria to objectively decide whether a person is really enlightened or whether he imagines it.

**Response:** Does this mean one must give himself over mindlessly to each "master" to find which one has the "royal route to enlightenment"? Have you ever given your mind and yourself over totally to Jesus Christ to determine whether He has the genuine enlightenment? Do you think it is possible to be deceived by deceitful masters and/or Satan who masquerades as an angel of light?

**6. Either by meditation, discipline or self denial, one can eliminate ego and the "sin problem"**

**Response:** "The heart is deceitful.." (Jer 17:9). Outward or mental discipline cannot change our nature. We are egoistic and selfish in heart. We need a new heart. (Ezk 11:19). Eastern discipline recognises the need for changed behaviour but does nothing to change the source of that behaviour. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, theft, lies etc..." Mark 7:21-23. See also John 3:7.

**7. The result of sin is bad 'karma'** (sickness, deformities, tragedies, reincarnation to a lower state).

**Response:** How can there be no 'sin' (accountability to a higher or absolute authority) and yet there still be retribution for 'sin'? Who decides what we should come back as, or what should befall us in this life due to the way we live? How can we be saved from the 'BAD KARMA' of our wrongs?

### **Reincarnation**

Reincarnation is the belief that the spirit of every person comes back after death to be reborn into a new body. Buddhists and Hindus believe that a series of up to eight million births and rebirths may be necessary before a person can progress to an ultimate state of perfection. The "Law of Karma" holds that a person reaps in a following lifetime what they have sown previously. If you are a wife-beater in this life, you will return in the next life as the wife of a violent man.

1. Justice is not satisfied by reincarnation. What justice is there in a person suffering for wrongs he has no recollection of?

2. There is no standard of morality. Who decides what is bad? Who actually makes the judgement about what a person will suffer in a future life?

3. According to the belief in reincarnation the world should be getting a better place, as people evolve morally and spiritually. The opposite is true.

4. The "Law of Karma" creates an eternal problem of evil which can never be solved. There must always be evil, pain and suffering in a following life to pay for the evil in a previous life.

5. People who claim to recall their past lives are small in number and usually have only brief glimpses of recollection. There is no scientific means to verify their claims. Our memory can play tricks on us because it is triggered by association. Music, smells, the type of country-side, and other factors can make us think we remember being there.

6. There is no forgiveness or mercy with the law of Karma. It is an iron-clad system which provides no hope.

7. The Bible says **"Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement"** (Heb.9:27).

SHARE THE GOSPEL FROM COLOSSIANS 1:13-23, 27, and I John 1:5-10

### 3. The Baha'i Faith

#### Introduction

The Baha'i Faith is a relatively new religion, begun in 1844 in Iran. It originated out of Shiite Islam, but is an independent religion.

The primary Baha'i belief is that all religions derive from the same source. It centres in devotion to a person Baha'ullah, believed to be God's manifestation for the modern age. It demands unreserved acceptance of his person to be God's latest revelation to the world, and requires absolute submission to his every word and command.

The Baha'i Faith is growing, particularly among minority groups because of the emphasis on world unity.

#### History

The Baha'i Faith grew out of the Babism Movement which was founded in 1844 in Iran. A Shiite named Mirza Ali Muhammad, who called himself The Bab (meaning - the Gate) promoted radical social and religious changes in the Shiite sect, and started the Babism Movement. This movement lasted until 1853.

The reform included prohibition of the study of law, logic, philosophy, dead languages and grammar. All Muslim books except the Qur'an were destroyed. He taught that all kings who became Babism should seek to evangelise others and remove all unbelievers from their countries.

After much persecution of him and his followers, the Bab was publicly executed in 1850. Before his death he declared he was the forerunner of one who would come after him and form a universal religion.

As Baha'i history records it, the Bab was sentenced to death and was executed July 8, 1850, at Tabriz. In the view of thousands, as the Baha'is tell it, 750 Armenian soldiers raised their rifles and fired at the figure of the prophet. Alas, all this was to no avail, for, when the smoke cleared, the Bab had not only emerged unscathed from the fusillade of bullets, but the bullets had burned through the ropes which held him, and he stood unfettered.

"The story goes on to relate that he then disappeared from their vision, but upon returning to his cell, the guards found him lecturing his disciples. After he had finished his speaking with them, he is reported to have said "I have finished my conversation. Now you may fulfil your intention." He was then led out before the same firing squad and this time they did not miss."

From 'The Kingdom of the Cults' by Walter R. Martin

The Babism Movement was short lived. Followers of the Baha'i Faith today respect the Bab as a divine manifestation like Buddha or Jesus, but the Bab is no longer a current manifestation. Therefore his pronouncements are no longer binding for today's follower of the Baha'i Faith.

An imprisoned disciple of the Bab - Mirza Husayn Ali was the son of one of Persia's most distinguished families. Because of his name he avoided execution along with other disciples of the Bab. Instead he was imprisoned in Tehran. He was then banished to Baghdad for 10 years after one of the Bab's disciples attempted to assassinate the Shah of Iran. This caused greater persecution of Mirza's followers. During Mirza's imprisonment, it became evident he was the one whom the Bab had predicted would come.

In 1863, Mirza and the remaining Babism were banished to Constantinople. On the eve of their journey Mirza declared he was the one the Bab had foretold would come. He then took the name Baha'ullah (the glory of God.) All the Babism who believed this declaration and obeyed Baha'ullah's commands were known as the Baha'is.

After years of persecution and imprisonment, the Baha'is and Baha'ullah were banished to the prison city of 'Akka in Israel. There he spent the rest of his life as a prisoner of the Turkish Government, though he was given more freedom over the years. During this time he saw guests,

sent off missionaries, wrote books and letters. One book he wrote was his book of laws, the 'Kitab'i Aqdas'. It is considered his "most weighty and sacred work". He died in 1852 - 75 years.

Baha'ullah's son, Abbas Effendi, who later became known as Abdu'l Baha (meaning - meaning servant of God) became the leader of the Baha'is. He never claimed to be a manifestation of God - he was merely the leader who had the final work on interpretation of Babis teaching. He was a prolific writer and an awe-inspiring speaker.

After being released from imprisonment by the Turkish Government, Abdu'l Baha travelled Europe and North America for the rest of his life, proselytising potential new converts and establishing Baha'i assemblies.

In 1920 the British Empire bestowed knighthood on Abdu'l Baha for his work for world peace and unity.

After his death in 1921, Abdu'l Baha's grandson Shoghi Effendi took over the leadership. After his death in 1957, the Baha'is were no longer governed by descendants of Baha'ullah but by an elected body of Baha'is representing all nations. This transition from Effendi's leadership to the elected Body, did not go as smoothly as the Baha'is depict it.

The dispute caused the start of the heretical Baha'i sect - 'The Orthodox Baha'i Faith' organised by excommunicated Jason Remey. They deny that the Universal House of Justice is the proper successor of Shoghi Effendi. They believe Remey was Effendi's true successor.

At present the international Headquarters for the Baha'is is in Haifa Israel, and Baha'is are suffering persecution in Iran. The headquarters in USA is in Wilmetts, Illinois.

## **Baha'i Doctrine of God**

### **The 'Unknowability of God'**

The Baha'is believe that God is an unknowable essence. Abdu'l Baha declares that "the reality of the Divinity is hidden from all comprehension, and concealed from the minds of all men. It is absolutely impossible to ascend to that plane."

The Baha'is believe this 'Essence of essences, Truth of truths, Mystery of mysteries may 'reveal' something of Himself through 'reflections, auroras, appearances and resplendencies in the world of existence. According to Abdu'l Baha, one of the ways God does reveal Himself is through His manifestations.

### **Revelations and Manifestations**

The Baha'is believe God gives new revelations in different human era's through man. They bring in new laws, too difficult for the previous era. They may change insignificant ordinances, but never 'eternal truths'.

The Baha'is believe revelation is a continuous process. Therefore there is no final or complete word of God. Whatever other major religions agree with the Baha'i Faith, religious unity is found. However, whenever differences are found, they are considered unimportant.

Baha'is distinguish true and false manifestations by the person claiming to be a new manifestation:

1. His truth is self-validating.
2. Fulfills prophecy of successor.
3. Each manifestation is a different individual.
4. There is an appointed time of succession.
5. He is humble, uneducated and has no status.
6. The manifestation is sinless.
7. He brings a new name, and new attribute of God.
8. He brings harmony among people.

9. He changes hearts, not using external power.

The Baha'is consider the following 'religious leaders' to have been manifestations of God; and the concept of God they revealed to their era:

<b>Religious Leader</b>	<b>Concept of God or gods</b>
Moses	God is personal. Strict, monotheism.
Krishna	Polytheism, but ultimately pantheistic and impersonal.
Zoroaster	Two Supreme Beings. Philosophical dualism.
Buddha	God not relevant. Essential agnostic.
Confucius	Polytheism
Jesus Christ	God is personal, able to beget a son. Strict, monotheism.
Muhammad	God is personal, unable to beget a son. Strict, monotheism.

There appears to be confusion and contradiction about God's nature among the alleged manifestations. Though Shoghi Effendi said that the manifestations disagree on "non-essential aspects of their doctrine", it stretches credibility to the limit to assume that the nature of God is a non-essential aspect.

God cannot be impersonal, personal, transcendent, polytheistic, pantheistic, monotheistic, able to beget, not able to beget, relevant and irrelevant all at the same time!

### **The Baha'i view of Jesus Christ**

The Baha'i view of Jesus Christ is contrary to Christian teaching. The New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ was the unique Son of God and set apart from all men.

However Baha'ullah writes:

"Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His essence and reveal it unto men." In saying this, the Baha'is deny that God CAN in fact reveal Himself and indeed DID in Jesus Christ. Instead, the Baha'is believe Jesus Christ is but one of many manifestations - merely a reflection of God's essence.

The Baha'is deny Christ rose from the dead, saying it was a symbolic event of spiritual nature only. They say the fact that the early Christian Church was so dynamic and radically transformed the Roman Empire was due to Christ's teachings, not His resurrected power.

The Baha'is may claim Jesus Christ will return bodily in the skies, but in fact they do not believe this. What they believe is that Baha'ullah is God's manifestation for this era - or Christ returned.

Jesus Christ said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6). This is denied by Baha'is. They claim that Baha'ullah is a new divine manifestation for this era, replacing Christ and bringing in a new dispensation. They therefore deny the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.

Baha'is do not believe in the Christian concept that there are three persons of the Godhead - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Baha'is believe that God is one person but cannot accept that God is Three in One.

### **Baha'i Administration**

Baha'ullah left a plan by which all the people of the world can be united. It is called the World Order of Baha'ullah. This plan calls for local, national, and international participation in a world community.

Local Communities - when there are nine or more Baha'is living in a local area, a Local Spiritual Assembly is elected. This election takes place on April 21<sup>st</sup>, a Baha'i holy day. A Local Spiritual Assembly is given authority by Baha'ullah to take care of the affairs of the local Baha'i Community. Baha'is must obey the decisions of their Local Spiritual Assembly.

National Communities - The Baha'is of each country elect a National Spiritual Assembly once each year. The National Spiritual Assembly helps and guides Local Spiritual Assemblies. Its decisions must be obeyed by all Baha'is in the country.

World Community - The members of all of the National Spiritual Assemblies together elect the Universal House of Justice "...which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error..." Baha'ullah promises that the Universal House of Justice is under the protection of God and is guarded from mistake.

### **Laws and Obligations** (From a Baha'i Publication)

The teachings and laws of Baha'ullah enable us to live in harmony with each other according to the Will of God.

- Daily prayer - Baha'ullah tells us to pray daily. There are many Baha'i prayers, but Baha'ullah has given us three special prayers. We must say one of these each day. These three special prayers are called Obligatory Prayers.
- Fast - Each year from March 2 to March 21 is a time of fasting. Baha'is have nothing to eat or drink from sunrise to sunset.
- Nineteen Day Feast - Baha'is have a new calendar. The year is divided into 19 months. Each month has 19 days. On the first day of each Baha'i month, the local Baha'i community comes together for prayer and readings from the Baha'i Holy Books, community consultation about recent and future activities, and fellowship.
- Drinking of alcohol (beer, wine, etc.) is strictly forbidden.
- The use of drugs (including marijuana, peyote, heroin, LSD) is strictly forbidden.
- Baha'is must have their parents' consent before they marry and a Baha'i marriage ceremony is necessary.
- Baha'is must obey the laws of the country in which they live.
- Baha'is must not join political parties or become involved in politics.
- Each Baha'i has the privilege and obligation to give regularly to the Baha'i fund. Contributions are voluntary.
- Every Baha'i should study the Baha'i teachings every day.
- It is the duty of every Baha'i to teach the Baha'i Faith to others.
- Every Baha'i should be honest and truthful, and courteous to his fellow man.

*"Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds."* Baha'ullah

### **Some of Baha'ullah's Teachings**

1. There is only one God.
2. All religions come from God.
3. Religion must be the cause of unity.
4. All men belong to the same human family.
5. Each person should seek truth for himself.
6. Men and women are equal.
7. Prejudice of all kinds must be forgotten.
8. All people must be educated.
9. All men must work toward universal peace.

## **Baha'i View of the Bible**

The Baha'is believe Jesus Christ spoke to His own era and Baha'is must be severed from all and everything of the past, good and bad. Therefore, they do not accept Christ is relevant for today. However, New Testament Scripture teaches Jesus Christ is God, and that He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). His Word is binding and will never pass away.

The Baha'is claim that the New Testament has no absolute accuracy. They accept that Christians may believe the Bible, but revelations of Baha'ullah supersede it, and have the final authority in matters of religion.

Baha'ullah claims that there was no possible way anyone could understand the Old and New Testaments until the present day. According to them, the Books had been 'sealed' until the time of the end. They quote Daniel 12:9 "Go thy way Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end". And Daniel 7:1-10 "I beheld till the (other) thrones were cast down and the Ancient of Days did sit...and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him; the judgement was set and the books were opened".

Baha'ullah claims he has 'unsealed' the Books and revealed their hidden inner meanings.

Baha'is claim "human knowledge is of two kinds, one is the knowledge of the senses... the other kind of human knowledge is intellectual ...love...joy." The writings of Baha'ullah point out that in order to explain these inward intellectual or spiritual realities, it is necessary to use figures, or symbols which are apparent to the outward senses..."until the student of scriptures understands this fundamental truth, the holy Books will remain incomprehensible to him."

## **The Appeal of the Baha'i Faith**

The Baha'i appeal is based on world peace and unity. According to Baha'ullah, all men belong to the same human family, no racial, social sexual discrimination. This particularly appeals to minority groups who are discriminated against. In southern USA, the converts to the Baha'i Faith are 99% African-American. There is also a considerable number of Spanish speaking people and American Indians turning to the Baha'i Faith.

Education has a big emphasis because it is considered to solve man's problems. They maintain several Baha'i schools.

Baha'is accept nine world religions and their insistence that all truth comes from the same God appeals to people who hate the assertion that "only their way is right."

Baha'is claim over 1,000,000 converts in every country of the world. In USA they grew from 10,000 to more than 100,000 members from 1960-1970. They are active on over 230 college campuses.

The world Headquarters is in Haifa Israel. They have a temple in Wilmette, Illinois, based on their sacred number, nine. The architecture is a combination of a synagogue, mosque and cathedral in which there are nine concrete piers, nine pillars, and nine arches. It is set in a park with nine sides, nine avenues, nine gates and nine fountains.

The worship service consists of readings from Baha'ullah, Abdum Baha and whatever sources from major world religions that are thought to be relevant for the day.

Around the central dome of the Temple are various quotations, which emphasise the unity of all the great religions of the world.

## **The Christian's Approach to Witnessing to Baha'is**

The Baha'is are blinded by their false teaching, and need to hear the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are three major areas that are most effective in reaching Baha'is:

### **1. The Sinfulness of Man**

The Baha'is believe man is basically good and any faults found in man can be corrected through education. This is not a Biblical concept. In fact King Solomon found study to be meaningless (Eccl 1:14) "I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under heaven. What a heavy burden God had laid on men. I have seen all the things that are done under the sun, all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

This is not salvation by faith, but striving to reach God by the merit of yourself. Man is not basically good, and this should be pointed out to the Baha'is. "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags*" (Isaiah 64:6)

### **2. The Nature of God.**

Baha'is believe that God is holy, but because of their disbelief that man is sinful they cannot explain how man is accepted by God. If man has no sin nature, why can't he be accepted into God's holy presence?

They claim God is unknowable and only reveals Himself through manifestations. They need to be shown that God **can** be known, and the only way we can be accepted by Him, is through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross, pointing out that Christ is God Incarnate. Through faith in His death, burial and resurrection we can have new life.

### **3. The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ**

Baha'is spiritualise this event and quote scripture out of context.

This is our stronghold in witnessing to all..."You killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses of this." Acts 3:15.

This goes hand in hand with accepting the Bible as the inerrant Word of God. The Bible has eye witness accounts of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

What foundation is there in the teachings of the so called 'manifestations of God which differ from age to age?'

### **4. Mormonism**

"Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:7-8).

#### **History**

Joseph Smith Jr. was born December 23rd 1805. The Smith family attended a Presbyterian Church in New York, but Joseph's concern over the tension between the various denominations prepared the way for his alleged first vision.

#### **The first Vision**

In 1820, Joseph allegedly received a vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ, in which he enquired about which denomination was right. He records "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight" (Joseph Smith, Pearl of Great Price, 2:18, 19).

#### **The Second Vision**

(September 21, 1823). He claims "A personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air . . . said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni. . . he said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Saviour to the ancient inhabitants; Also there were two stones in silver bows . . . deposited with the plates; and the position and use of these stones were what constituted "seers" in ancient or former times; and

that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book (Joseph Smith, The Pearl of Great Price, 2:50-54).

The commencement of the 'Church of Christ'

With alleged 'divine help' Joseph began to copy the characters (which he claimed to be 'reformed Egyptian') and began to translate them. The translation was finally completed and placed on sale on March 26th 1830. A little over a week later on April 6th 1830, the "Church of Christ" was officially started with six members.

The numbers increased rapidly and moved to Kirkland, Ohio where Joseph made the first printing of a number of divine revelations he had claimed to receive. This was known as the "Book of Commandments", and has had many significant changes, and now has been re-titled "Doctrine and Covenants". From 1831 to 1844 Smith allegedly "received 135 direct revelations from God."

Smith and his followers then moved to Illinois to a town he named Nauvoo, where he organised a small army and gave himself the title Lieut. General. The local paper "the Nauvoo Expositor" began publishing anti Mormon material and Smith ordered the press destroyed and every copy of the paper burned. This led to Smith's arrest and imprisonment.

On June 27, 1844, a mob of about 200 people stormed the jail and shot and killed Joseph and his brother Hiram. After the death of Joseph Smith the leadership went to Brigham Young, the President of the 12 apostles. He led them west to the Salt Lake Valley in Utah which has become the headquarters of the Mormon Church.

### **Mormon beliefs**

#### 1. God

Mormons are polytheists. In their 'Articles of Faith' they seem orthodox - "We believe in God, the eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." However, the Mormons do not believe in the trinity, but in three separate Gods along with many other gods.

##### a. Many Gods

Joseph Smith: "In the beginning the head of the Gods called the council of the Gods and they came together and they concocted a plan to create the world and people it." "And they said: 'Let there be light . . . ' . . . and the Gods pronounced the dry land earth . . . and the Gods . . ." (Abr.3:1-5:8). (Deut.6:4ff., Isa.43:10, 45:10, 1 Tim.2:5, Gal.3:20)

##### b. God Has a Body of Flesh and Bone

God is said to have a material body: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's: The Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (Doctrine and Covenants 130:20). (1 Tim.6:16, 1:17, John 4:24, Jer. 23:24, Ps 91:4)

##### c. God Has a Father

Joseph Fielding Smith explains: "The Prophet taught that our Father had a Father and so on. Is this not a reasonable thought, especially when we remember that the promises are made to us that we may become like him?" (Doctrine of Salvation, Vol. 1, pp. 10, 12) (Isaiah 44:8, Psalm 90:2).

##### d. God Has a Wife: Our Eternal Mother

"This doctrine that there is a Mother in heaven was affirmed in plainness by the First Presidency of the Church . . ." (Mormon Doctrine 1966, p. 516). (Matthew 22:30).

##### e. God Was Once a Man

"He became God by absolute obedience to all the eternal laws of the Gospel . . ." (The Gospel Through The Ages, 1958, pp. 114, 115).

"As man is, God once was: as God is, man may be" (Articles of Faith No.13).

##### f. Men Can Become Gods

"The Lord created you and me for the purpose of becoming Gods like himself . . . We are created . . . to become like Gods like unto our Father in heaven" (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 10, p. 223)

## 2. Jesus Christ

### a. Virgin Birth

Joseph Fielding Smith: "Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and the Man was God!" (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol. 1, p. 18). In other words god the father in physical form had sexual intercourse with Mary!

### b. Deity of Christ

"The difference between the Father, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, men, and even the devil, is one of degree, not of kind." (Col.1:15, 16, Heb.1)

### c. Blood of Jesus

"There is not a man or woman who violates covenants made with their God that will not be required to pay their debt. The blood of Christ will never wipe that out. Your own blood must atone for it; the judgements of the Almighty will come sooner or later, and every man and woman will have to atone for their covenants" (Brigham Young, Journal of Discourse, Vol. 3, p. 247 and Vol. 4, pp. 219-220). (1 John 1:7, 2:2, Heb.9:13, 14, 1 Peter 1:18, 19, Rom.5:8, 9, Rev.1:5)

## 3. The Holy Spirit

Doctrine and Covenants 130:22: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit."

## 4. Salvation

Mormons believe salvation is twofold.

I. General - to all men irrespective of a belief (in this life) in Christ.

"The second sphere, The Terrestrial, will be inhabited by "accountable persons who die without law" or who "did not accept the gospel" (MD, p. 784). Most of the adult people who have lived since Adam (having rejected Christ and lived wickedly) will go to the "Telestial Kingdom" (MD, p. 778).

II. Individual - that which a man merits through his own acts and obedience to the Laws and Ordinances of the Gospel.

"Salvation is available only through good works and obedience to the laws of the gospel. Man is saved by grace after all that he can do. 2 Nephi 25:23 (Book of Mormon).

"Will the water (of baptism) of itself wash them (sins) away? No: but keeping the commandments of God will cleanse away the stain of sin."

Mormons also believe that the dead can be released from the grasp of Satan by baptism in the deceased ones name.

"The saints are redeeming their (unbaptised) dead from the grasp of Satan" (Morgan Plan of Salvation p. 8).

"Very gladly would the Lord give to every one eternal life, but since that blessing can come only on merit - through the faithful performance of duty - only those who are worthy shall receive it. (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol. 2, p. 5, 6).

## Sources of Authority

### a. Sacred Writings

The Mormon Church has four accepted sacred books, the KJV of the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price. They also regard the prophetic words of the current Apostle (head and prophet) to be authoritative.

## I. The Bible

Article of Faith #8 "We believe the Bible to be the Word of God in so far as it is translated correctly..." They claim that the Bible cannot be trusted, however, as it has been corrupted from the early church through to today.

### The Mormon Dilemma

Smith claimed an authority that was not even claimed by Jesus Christ Himself - namely, the authority to alter the text of Scripture. Matthew 5:18: "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot (the smallest letter) or one tittle (the least stroke of a pen) shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled".

Smith re-wrote the Bible text: "this day finished the translating of the Scriptures" (dated July 2, 1833 at Kirtland, Ohio, History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 368). Some of Smith's revisions to the King James text fail to agree with the same passages he quoted in the Book of Mormon. Other portions contradict current Mormon doctrine. Therefore, fully endorsing it could prove embarrassing to the Mormon Church, but flatly rejecting it as erroneous would discredit Smith as a prophet. Instead, LDS leaders have sidestepped the issue by alleging that the work Smith began in 1831 was left unfinished at his untimely death in 1844;

## II. The Book of Mormon

Mormons believe they are fortunate not to have to rely solely on the Bible. They are in possession of a " . . . latter day revelation, given through prophets of modern times . . . "

" . . . We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God" (Article 8, The Articles of Faith)

### A. It's Source

The Book of Mormon is said to have been translated from plates of gold which had been hidden by one of the last remaining leaders of an ancient civilization called the "Nephites". These plates remained hidden for centuries and were claimed to have been found by Joseph Smith at a hill called Cumorah in New York, after the angel Moroni led him to them. Joseph Smith said he returned the plates to the angel Moroni when the translation was complete, and they have never been seen since.

### B. Credibility of the claim

- Parallels (plagiarism) with other writings available to Joseph Smith at the time:

Parallels with the King James Version. Many verses in the Book of Mormon are supposed to have been written between 600 B.C. and A.D. 33. Why do they parallel, and in some cases, quote verbatim the King James Version of the N.T. which was written after the Book of Mormon was supposed to have been written? (A few examples: I John 1:3 and I Nephi 1:18; John 11:50 and I Nephi 4:13; Rom.5:5 and I Nephi 11:22). In a study by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, they list 400 parallels between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon; these do not exhaust the list (The Changing World of Mormonism, by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Moody, 1980, Page 122).

Parallels with the Apocrypha. One example: The story of Judith in the Apocrypha resembles the story of the decapitation of Laban in the Book of Mormon. In both stories the wicked man was drunk with wine (I Nephi 4:7 and Judith 13:2), the servant of the Lord took the wicked man's weapon (I Nephi 4:9 and Judith 13:6), the servant of the Lord took hold of the wicked man's hair (I Nephi 4:18 and Judith 13:7) and the wicked man's head was cut off with his own weapon (I Nephi 4:18 and Judith 13:8).

The name "Nephi" is not found in either the Old or New Testaments. Mormon writers feel it comes from either an Egyptian source or some other source. It is interesting to note that in II Maccabees 1:36 we read: "And Neemias called this thing Naphthar, which is as much to say, a cleansing, but many men call it Nephi."

- Parallels with the Westminster Confession. It appears that the Westminster Confession, chapters 32, is probably the source of Alma, chapter 40. Both claim to give information concerning the state of man after death (Alma 40:11 and Westminster Confession 32:1), both

state that the souls of men return to God after death (Alma 40:11 and Westminster Confession 32:1), both claim the righteous are received into a state of peace (Alma 40:12 and Westminster Confession 32:1), both state the wicked are cast out into darkness (Alma 40:13 and Westminster Confession 32:1), both state the souls of the wicked remain in darkness until judgement (Alma 40:14 and Westminster Confession 32:2), both state that the soul will be united again with the body at the time of the resurrection (Alma 40:20 and Westminster Confession 32:2).

- Parallels with Local Newspapers

In Joseph Smith's time many people speculated as to the lineage of the Indians. In certain local newspapers of Palmyra, New York, where Joseph Smith was from, there are some interesting parallels.

In the Palmyra Register, May 26, 1819, one writer: "believes (and we think with good reason) that this country was once inhabited by a race of people, at least, partially civilized, and that this race has been exterminated by the forefathers of the present and late tribes of the Indians of this country."

The Wayne Sentinel, July 24, 1829, reported that, ". . . we may suppose that some dreadful plague, some national calamity swept them from the face of the earth; or perhaps like Sodom and Gomorrah of old, their nation sins became so heinous, that the Almighty in His wrath utterly annihilated them . . ." . The Book of Mormon states that the Nephites were a civilized people who were destroyed by the Lamanites - a wicked people - for their sins.

The Wayne Sentinel, on June 1, 1827 wrote: "Professor Seyffarth of Leipsig, who has been employed in deciphering the Egyptian Antiquities at Rome, states . . . that he has found . . . a Mexican manuscript in hieroglyphics from which he infers, that the Mexicans and the Egyptians had intercourse with each other from the remotest antiquity, and that they had the same system of mythology." It is interesting that even though the Nephites were to have come from Jerusalem, that the Book of Mormon was written in "the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:2).

- Parallels with "View of the Hebrews" by Ethan Smith

Ethan Smith wrote "View of the Hebrews" in an effort to prove that the American Indians descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Mormon apostle and historian B.H. Roberts, was deeply impressed with the similarities between "View of the Hebrews" (published in 1823, seven years prior) and the Book of Mormon. He came up with 18 parallels between the two books.

Four examples from "View of the Hebrews":

1. Origin of the American Indians: descended from the Hebrews pp. 172, 184.

(Book of Mormon - Indians descended from Hebrews - Alma 10:3)

2. The Lost Book: "had not long since a book which they had for a long time preserved. But having lost the knowledge of reading it, they concluded it would be of no further use to them; and they buried it with an Indian chief." pp. 223-224.

(Book of Mormon - Ancient records of Americans were buried by one of the last remaining Nephite leaders. Smith later claimed to find it).

3. Urim and Thummin and Breast Plate: describes breastplates and the Urim and Thummin.

(Book of Mormon - the Book of Mormon was translated with Urim and Thummin, and this was also by ancient Americans, D & C 17:1).

4. Isaiah: quotes copiously from Isaiah, pp. 56-73, 109-111, 227-261, etc. (40 citations from Isaiah, 15 of which are in the Book of Mormon).

(Book of Mormon - Eighteen chapters of Isaiah quoted (2-14, 48-49, 52-54).

It is granted that a few insignificant parallels between the two books prove nothing, but the presence of a large amount of parallels, many dealing with significant issues, are evidence enough to raise honest doubt as to the inspiration of the Book of Mormon.

Other problems with the Book of Mormon

- The Book of Mormon quotes from Malachi, which was written between 200 and 300 years after Lehi !
- The Book of Mormon contains the words "Alpha and Omega" which are from the Greek language which was not known 600 years B.C. !
- The Book of Mormon mentions "most precious steel" (not known at that time), sailing across the ocean with the aid of a "compass" (invented about 1000 A.D.), and in it, Jacob bids his brethren "adieu" (the earliest French was about 700 A.D.)
- The Book of Mormon is supposed to contain the "fullness of the gospel", yet it does not mention or even support many Mormon doctrines - Baptism for the dead, Melchizedek priesthood with accompanying authority, God's body of flesh and bone, the plurality of Gods, Mother God, Adam God doctrine, Polygamy, Temple marriage, Mormon purgatory, Degrees of glory (see I Nephi 15:35 and Alma 5:24, 25, 39).
- The Book of Mormon is not supported by archaeology

Since the Book of Mormon claims that there was once an ancient civilized society living on the North American continent, it seems logical to conclude that there would be great archaeological findings supporting this position. This has not been the case.

Michael Coe, one of the best known authorities on archaeology of the Americas wrote: "Mormon archaeologists over the years have almost unanimously accepted the Book of Mormon as an accurate, historical account of the New World people. Let me now state that as far as I know there is not one professionally trained justification for believing the foregoing to be true, and I would like to state that there are quite a few Mormon archaeologists who join this group . . . " ("Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought," Summer, 1973, pp. 41, 42, 46).

1. No Book of Mormon cities have ever been located.
2. No names in 'New World' inscriptions.
3. No persons, nations, or places
4. No genuine inscriptions in the Hebrew language
5. No genuine inscriptions in Egyptian
6. No ancient inscriptions ... Judaistic or Christian beliefs.
7. No ancient copies of the Book of Mormon have been found.

Weapons of warfare - Coin of the Realm

Joseph Smith's other blunder was concerning weapons and coinage. The Book of Mormon is full of wars and bloodshed. In the section of the Book of Mormon covering the period from 544 B.C. to 52 B.C. and including pages 107 to 359, we find listed the following items of armament: bows and arrows; steel swords; breastplates of brass and copper; arm shields; stone slings; clubs; axes; javelins; horses and chariots;

The History of America reveals that the early Americans knew nothing of metal until the coming of the Spaniards. When the Spaniards first encountered armed warriors in American they found these warriors wearing body armour composed of quilted cotton that had been steeped in brine and shields made of wickerwork and covered with hides.

The first items of gold found in early American excavations were a few gold beads that are dated not earlier than the seventh century. It would have been disconcerting for Joseph Smith had he known that the values of metals when they were discovered, ranged from iron as the scarcest and

most valuable, to gold which was plentiful and cheap. His coinage system worked the opposite way.

- Changes in the Book of Mormon

Jerald and Sandra Tanner discovered 3,913 changes between the Book of Mormon, 1830 edition and 1964 edition. Most of these changes have to do with grammatical and spelling errors and do not change the basic meaning of the text, but there are some which alter the meaning of the text.

In I Nephi 13:40 of the 1830 edition we read that the purpose of the Nephite records was to make known that the Lamb of God is the Eternal Father and the Saviour of the world (Book of Mormon, 1830 ed., p.32). In the current Utah edition, page 25, verse 40, three words have been interpolated: ". . . These last records . . . shall make known to all kindred, tongues, and people, that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal Father, and the Saviour of the world . . ." This considerably alters the meaning of the text.

Another change was made in I Nephi 11:18, page 25 of the 1830 edition. In the first edition, it reads: ". . . Behold, the virgin which thou seest, is the mother of God, after the manner of flesh." In modern editions, it has been changed to read: ". . . Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh."

In the 1830 edition, p.200, we read: ". . . King Benjamin had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings . . ." Modern editions now read: ". . . King Mosiah had a gift from God, whereby he could interpret such engravings . . ." (1964 ed., p. 176, v.28). This is important because according to the chronology found in the Book of Mormon, Benjamin should have been dead at this time.

### III. Doctrine and Covenants

A book containing 138 supposed revelations, including some of Mormonism's most distinctive doctrines. The original book was entitled "Book of Commandments", and the printing press and most copies were burned by opponents shortly after it's publication. When it was re-published shortly after, these supposedly 'inspired Scriptures' had many significant changes in line with the changing theology and further 'revelations' of Joseph Smith.

Book of Commandments (1833) "Behold, this is mine authority, and the authority of my servants, and my preface unto the Book of Commandments which I have given them to publish unto you, oh inhabitants of the earth" and "Behold I am God, and have spoken it, these commandments are of me."

#### a. Contradictions between Mormon 'Sacred' Books

"The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy."

(Journal of Discourses,  
Vol.11, p. 269)

". . . if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery. . . and if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery . . ."

(Doctrine and Covenants, 1966,  
132:1-62)

"He (God) is our Father . . is now an exalted being. How many there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there was not Gods . . ."

(Journal of Discourses, Vol.7 p.333)

"The Father has a glorious body of flesh and bone."

(Doctrine and Covenants, 1966,

132:20)

"Remember that God our heavenly Father, was perhaps once a child, and mortal like we ourselves, and rose step by step in the scale of progress. . . until he has arrived at the point where He now is."

(Journal of Discourses, Vol. 1 p.123)

". . . shall be received by baptism into his church."

(Doctrine and Covenants, 1966,  
20 & 37)

"All others . . . will be redeemed in due time of the Lord; that is, they will all be saved. The meanest sinner will find some place in the heavenly realm . . . In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, there is no hell."

("Joseph Smith - Seeker after truth" by Apostle Widstoe, p. 177)

". . . to send them there to hell and remain there until the corruption with which they are impregnated is burned out. . ."

(Journal of Discourses, Vol.4 p. 223)

"Negroes in this life are denied the priesthood; under no circumstances can they hold this delegation of authority from the Almighty."

(Mormon Doctrine, 1958, p. 477)

#### b. Changes

Tanner: "Things once approved now condemned,  
Things once condemned now approved."

". . . you have the gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed on you; and I commanded that you should pretend no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished." (1835 edition)

". . . concerning the foundation of my church . . ." (1835 edition)

#### (b) Book of Mormon

"These plates . . . have been translated by the power of God. The translation of them which you have seen is correct" (Joseph Smith). There are 2,800 changes to the Book of Mormon, not counting punctuation changes.

EXAMPLE:

NOW:

". . . that the Lamb of God is the Son of the Eternal God, and the Saviour . . ."

#### IV. Church leaders

(1) Brigham Young stated, "The Lord Almighty leads this church and he will never suffer you to be lead astray if you are found doing your duty. You may go home and sleep as sweetly as a babe in its mother's arms, as to any danger of your leaders leading you astray . . ." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 9, Page 289).

(2) Any Latter Day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the "prophets, seers, and revelators" of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy . . . When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan - it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy (Improvement Era, June, 1945, Page 354)

(3) Joseph Smith gave a revelation in which the Mormons were told to "give heed unto all his words and commandments which he shall give unto you . . . his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith" (Doctrine and Covenants, Volume 21, pp. 4-5).

#### THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

The Book of Abraham is found in the Pearl of Great Price and considered to be Scripture by Mormons. This book was translated by Joseph Smith from papyri supposedly written by Abraham some 4,000 years ago. Joseph Smith tells us how he acquired the papyri in his History of the Church: "The records were obtained from one of the catacombs of Egypt . . . by the celebrated French traveller, Antonio Sebolo ... he made will of the whole to Mr Michael H. Chandler . . . On opening the coffins he discovered . . . two rolls of papyrus . . ." (History of the Church, Vol.2, pp.348-349).

Mr Chandler was exhibiting the Egyptian artefacts in Kirkland, Ohio in 1835, and came to the attention of Joseph Smith. The Mormons purchased the mummies and the papyri from Mr Chandler, after which Joseph Smith declared the papyri to be the writings of Abraham and Joseph of Egypt: " . . . I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt etc . . ." (History of the Church, Vol.2, Page 236).

Joseph Smith published the Book of Abraham after translating it from the papyri. It included three drawings which he called "facsimiles" numbers 1, 2, and 3, which were also copied from the papyri. The collection of papyri owned by Joseph Smith were lost until 1967 when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York presented the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints with 11 pieces of papyri identified as the original documents from which Joseph Smith made his translation. Joseph Smith's ability as a translator of ancient Egyptian could then be tested.

Upon receiving the papyri, instead of turning them over to qualified Egyptologists for translation, the Mormon church leaders put them in the hands of Dr. Hugh Nibley, a leading apologist for the Mormon church. It is significant that no translation of the papyri ever appeared in any of his articles or his book "The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment."

Dee Jay Nelson, an elder in the church, had been studying the Egyptian language for about 20 years, was an internationally known lecturer on archaeological and natural history. Dr. Nibley enlisted his help in translating the Joseph Smith Papyri.

Dee Jay Nelson's translation was not what the Mormon leaders expected.

Mr Nelson found no mention of Abraham or his religion in this text, but discovered that it is in reality a part of the Egyptian "Book of Breathings" which is one of a number of short funeral works addressed to the deceased by the chief priest conducting the funeral service (see The Book of the Dead, Facsimiles of the Papyri of Hunefer, Anhai, Kerasher and Netchemet, by E.A. Wallis Budge, London, 1899, Page 33). Since his translation proved unfavourable to the Mormon Church, they refused to publish it, but Mr Nelson's work was later published by Modern Microfilm Company. As a result of his translation and research regarding the Joseph Smith Papyri, Dee Jay Nelson resigned from the Mormon Church, stating that he did not: "wish to be associated with a church which teaches lies . . ." (Fig.2, back of Page 47). He shows how that Joseph Smith 'translated' 177 English words out of the word "khons" - the name of an Egyptian moon god!

Many other qualified Egyptologists from as early as 1860 have announced accurate translations from the original papyri revealing they have nothing to do with Abraham, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that the "Book of Abraham" is a false translation.

Joseph Smith's translation of the Bible - the Inspired Version

Mormon Doctrine 1958, page 351, 352 " . . . at the command of the Lord and while acting under the spirit of revelation, the Prophet corrected, revised, altered, added to, and deleted from the King James Version of the Bible . . . the marvellous flood of light and knowledge revealed through

the "Inspired Version" of the Bible is one of the great evidences of the divine mission of Joseph Smith."

However, it is the source of much embarrassment for Mormon leaders. They cannot reject it entirely without admitting Joseph Smith was a deceiver. On the other hand, to endorse it and print it today would reveal to everyone many contradictory doctrines from what it is taught today.

Joseph Smith often ignored his "Inspired Version" and quoted King James Version. He was, at the time of translation, not at all familiar with the Hebrew and Greek languages. The Inspired Version includes 1 John 5:7b, 8a (not in the original Greek manuscripts). Over 800 words added to Genesis 50:24 including a prophecy of a future "Seer" whose "name shall be called Joseph, and it shall be after the name of his father . . ."

#### **IV. Church leaders**

Any Latter Day Saint who denounces or opposes, whether actively or otherwise, any plan or doctrine advocated by the "prophets, seers, and revelators" of the Church is cultivating the spirit of apostasy . . . When our leaders speak, the thinking has been done. When they propose a plan - it is God's plan. When they point the way, there is no other which is safe. When they give direction, it should mark the end of controversy (Improvement Era, June, 1945, Page 354)

#### **The failure of Joseph Smith is qualifying as a true prophet of God:**

The issue that divides Christians from Mormons is the issue of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion.

Mormons believe Joseph Smith was a true prophet. Christians believe he was a false prophet.

He claimed that he had numerous visits from "glorious personages" from heaven including God the Father, Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, Elias, Michael, Raphael, Nephi, Moroni, and Mormon. Obviously, he is either the most important prophet who ever lived or he is the biggest fraud.

The importance of Joseph Smith to Mormonism:

J. Fielding Smith, tenth President of the Mormon church stated, "Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God . . . or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground."

Brigham Young stated, "Every spirit that confesses that Joseph Smith is a prophet, that he lived and died a prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of anti-Christ." (History of the Church, Volume 7, Page 287).

J. Fielding stated, ". . . no salvation without accepting Joseph Smith . . . no man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the Kingdom of God." (Doctrine and Covenants, Volume 1, pp. 189, 190).

The Bible gives six objective tests whereby one can determine if one who claims to be a prophet of God is true or false. This paper examines Joseph Smith in the light of these six objectives tests:

**1. Congruency Test.** (Deut 13:1-5) A false prophet will contradict what God has already said. The Bible teaches that God is eternal with no beginning (Ps 90:1-2), yet Joseph Smith taught that God had a beginning, that He was born from a mother before the world was created. (Answers to Gospel Questions, Vol 3, p.142)

**2. Prophecy Test.** (Deut 18:14-22) A false prophet will make false predictions.

Fifty eight prophecies of Joseph Smith, examined by G.T. Harrison, failed to come to pass.

(1) "...I prophesy in the Name of the Lord God of Israel, unless the United States redress the wrong committed against the saints in the State of Missouri and punish the crimes committed by her officers, that in a few years the Government will be utterly overthrown and wasted and there will not be so much as a potsherd left..." (History of the Church Vol. 5 pg 394).

(2) In 1835, Joseph Smith prophesied that the coming of the Lord was near - within 56 years. "There are those of the rising generation who shall not taste death till Christ comes" (History of Church, Volume 2, Page 182).

On January 23, 1833, Joseph Smith stated, ". . . that I should continue in the priest's office until Christ comes." He, also, prophesied that "some of the twelve apostles that were first ordained, would live until Christ came", and he, Lyman Johnson, shall "see the Saviour come and stand upon the earth with power and great glory."

One prophecy, however, did come to pass. In 1844, Joseph Smith predicted that Christ would not return to earth in the 40 years subsequent to the prediction.

(3) In September 22, 23rd, 1832, Doctrine and Covenants, Volume 84, pgs 5, 31, Joseph Smith predicted a temple would be built in the western boundaries of the State of Missouri, before all those living then would pass away. Even after being driven from Missouri to Utah, the Mormons expected to return and fulfill the prophecy.

(4) Joseph Smith had a revelation that Jesus was born in Jerusalem.

In 1837, Joseph Smith said that the moon was inhabited by men and women like those on earth except they lived to about 1000 years of age. The men and women dressed uniformly "like quaker's style."

#### **4. Character Test**

**False Testimony:** Joseph Smith's false testimony, and that of his brother, Hyrum, resulted in destroying the publication of "The Nauvoo Expositor" which opposed Joseph Smith's political ambitions and exposed the practice of polygamy. Mormon leaders claimed it to be lies, but eight years after the death of Joseph Smith, they published the revelation on polygamy, proving Joseph's testimony to be false.

**Sexual Morals:** (2 Pet 2:14)

Cowdery, one of the three witnesses, plainly stated that Joseph Smith had a "dirty, nasty, filthy affair" with Fanny Algar.

Joseph Smith was "married" to at least 12 women prior to July 12, 1843, when the 'revelation' was purportedly given to him to permit polygamy.

The fifth President, Lorenzo Snow, said that anyone who lived in plural marriages prior to the time of the July 12, 1843, revelation was living in "adultery." Joseph Smith did not abide by his own rules, as he took plural wives with his first wife's consent.

Finally, Joseph Smith demanded the wives of all the 12 apostles. One, Heber Kimball, loved his wife and they asked Joseph if Kimball's daughter would not do as well in her place . . . " This young virgin was delivered over to the prophet.

The documentation for this is found in "No man knows my history" by Fawn Brodie Alfred Knopf, N.Y., 1973 pp.457-488.

**Behavior:** (Rom 16:18 Jude 16) A false prophet will be a self-centered, smooth-talking manipulator. Smith's biographer describes him as having a "hunger for power", as having a magnetic sway over people especially women and as insisting that his followers crown him "King of the Kingdom of God". This they did. Ibid. pp.74, 356.

**4. Financial Test.** (2 Pet 2:3, 14-15) A false prophet will be greedy for money. As a young man Joseph Smith spent his time looking for buried treasure. As a leader of the Mormon Church he was often arrested for failure to pay his debts. Towards the end of his life he was charged by the government for "treason, murder, arson, burglary, robbery, larceny and perjury". Ibid. pp.19-21, 194-207, 243.

**5. Denial of God Test.** (Jude 4) False prophets in some way deny Christ and God. Joseph Smith did not believe in one God but in many Gods. (Vol VI, Discourses). He taught that God was once a

man: "God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man." (Vol VI, Discourses). The Jewish-Christian faith has never taught that.

**Conclusion:** Joseph Smith is a false prophet because he fails all five tests. By contrast we find Christ to be God's true prophet because He passes all six tests:

**Congruency:** Jesus did not come to contradict the Bible but to fulfil it (Matt.5:17)

**Prophecy:** Jesus predicted His own resurrection (John 2:19-21)

**Character and morality:** Neither the friends nor the enemies of Jesus could find anything He did wrong (John 8:46 1 Pet.2:22)

**Financial:** When Jesus died, all He owned were the clothes on His back (Luke 23:35)

**Behavioural:** Jesus was so humble and approachable, that children, lepers, beggars and outcasts sought Him out (Matt.11:28-30 Luke 18:16 John 5:41-44)

**Denial:** Jesus sought always to glorify God (John 8:54 John 17). Three times the Father spoke from Heaven approving of His Son: (Matt.3:17 17:1-8 John 12:28).

Jesus is much more than God's Prophet. Indeed, He is the only Way by which men may come to know God (John 14:6).

Jer. 14:14 "The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds".

**Jesus warns of false prophets:**

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them...A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit...Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them...Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matt. 7:15-23).

**How to witness to a Mormon**

*"Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (Galatians 1:7-8).*

- Pray - it is a spiritual battle
- Get to know them personally if at all possible.
- Encourage them to honestly examine their beliefs.
- Define Bible terms clearly - they attach their own meaning to many biblical words.

**1. Challenge their authority**

Brigham Young said "Take up the Bible, compare the religion of the Latter Day Saints with it, and see if it will stand the test" (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 16, p. 46, 1873)

Orson Pratt said: "Convince us of our errors of Doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God and we will ever be grateful for the information. . . ." (The Seer, p. 15)

**2. Ask questions** (with sincerity – listening to their answers, and respecting them)

Questions to sincerely ask:

***What's the name of your God?***

***Who was he when he was a man?***

***What's the ultimate aim of a Mormon?***

## ***Are you to become a God? (Isaiah 43:8, 10)***

### ***What made you join the church?***

Disarm the Mormon's testimony by giving your own. Show how biblical faith is based on objective truth, not feeling. A Mormon's testimony is a creed (that Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God etc.) and also the personal experience of warm, inner feeling. The Christian must emphasise in his testimony the sense of conviction of sin, the truth he believed when he was saved and the transformation that resulted in his life. Emphasize the security and assurance a believer has in trusting Christ.

### ***How can we identify a false prophet according to the Bible?***

(Is there a more reliable way than how we may feel about a man?)

***If a man arose today and claimed to be a prophet, yet most of his prophecies failed to come to pass, would you believe him?***

***Do you agree with this statement by Joseph Fielding Smith, the 10th Mormon prophet (Doct. of Salv. Vol.1 Pg.188)?***

*"Mormonism, as it is called, must stand or fall on the story of Joseph Smith. He was either a prophet of God...or he was one of the biggest frauds this world has ever seen. There is no middle ground."*

***Do you believe that Joseph Smith was a true prophet of God?***

***If so, on what basis?***

Mormon apostle Orson Pratt said "...convince us of our errors of doctrine, if we have any, by reason, by logical arguments, or by the Word of God, and we will be forever grateful for the information" (The Seer pp.15-16).

***If it could be shown that Joseph Smith was a false prophet, how can you trust the Book of Mormon or the other church doctrines that Joseph Smith introduced?***

Fifty four prophecies by Joseph Smith have clearly failed to come to pass!

Here are three examples:-

1. In 1835 Joseph Smith prophesied that the coming of the Lord was near, within 56 years. (History of the Church Vol.2 pg 182).
2. On Jan 23rd 1833, Joseph Smith stated (History of the Church) "... that I should continue in the priest's office until Christ comes." He also prophesied that some of the 12 apostles (of the L.D.S.) "would live until Christ came" and that Lyman Johnson "shall live until the gathering is accomplished...and he shall see the Saviour come and stand upon the earth with power and great glory."
3. On September 22nd and 23rd 1832 (Doctrine & Co. Vol 84, pgs 2-5,31) Joseph Smith predicted a temple would be built on the western boundaries of the state of Missouri, before all those living would pass away. Even after being driven from Missouri to Utah, the Mormons expected to return and fulfil the prophecy (which has never come to pass).

### **Points to Remember**

- a. Don't argue. If they are not open to honest dialogue, only go so far and then don't waste time.
- b. Get them out of the groove of their programmed minds and keep them out!
- c. Back up what they challenge with quotes and paper work.
- d. Try and be objective - don't portray yourself as a bigot. Listen openly to what they say and seek answers from them.
- e. Explain meanings of every important word.

### **The Mormon Dilemma**

Some of Smith's revisions to the King James text fail to agree with the same passages as quoted in the Book of Mormon. Other portions contradict current Mormon doctrine. Therefore, fully endorsing it could prove embarrassing, but flatly rejecting it as erroneous would discredit Smith as a prophet. Instead, LDS leaders have sidestepped the issue by alleging that the work Smith began in 1831 was left unfinished at his untimely death in 1844; Smith wrote dated July 2, 1833 at Kirtland, Ohio, "this day finished the translating of the Scriptures" (History of the Church, vol. 1, p. 368).

Smith claimed an authority that was not even claimed by Jesus Christ Himself - namely, the authority to alter the text of Scripture. Matthew 5:18: "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot (the smallest letter) or one title (the least stroke of a pen) shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled".

## **4. Jehovah's Witnesses**

### **Who are the Jehovah's Witnesses?**

Jehovah's Witnesses have their origin in a man Charles Taze Russell in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the age of 18, he struggled with the idea of eternal hell and Divine judgment. He organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He published his divergent beliefs in a publication named "*The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom*" and founded Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society (today - the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society). He claimed that the Bible could be only understood according to his interpretations. He taught that the Trinity has a pagan origin and is not biblical, and deny the deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and any belief in hell.

Very few people who start studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses have sufficient knowledge of the Bible to challenge the Watchtower's teachings and interpretation of the Scriptures.

The Watchtower Society uses the Bible, but only to support their own beliefs. When a Bible passage does not agree with their doctrines, they interpret the Word of God to suit their preconceived ideas. For example, when Scripture clearly speaks of 144,000 Jews, and specifically shows that this number is made up of 12,000 people from each tribe of Israel (Revelation 7:4-8), the witnesses refuse to accept the plain statement of the Word of God, and spiritualize it. They say that God is speaking about "spiritual Israel" who are the special "anointed class" Jehovah chooses from among His "Witnesses" to go to heaven and reign with Christ. But the passage gives no hint of such an interpretation.

There are only two ways of looking at Scripture. Either you can start with what you believe and force the Bible to line up with your predetermined belief; or you can accept the Bible as the only authority, and change your beliefs to be in harmony with it.

Are you willing to change your beliefs when they do not fit Scripture, or will you force the Bible verses to say what you want them to say, in order to support your own (or the Watchtower's) belief?

### **Source of Authority**

1. The Holy Bible (preferably King James Version)
2. The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, 1984 ed.
3. The Watchtower magazine which is like a Bible commentary written by the Watchtower Society

### **What do the Jehovah's Witnesses Teach?**

#### **1. JWs deny the Trinity**

- Jehovah is the one true God who is the Father.
- Jesus Christ is the pre-incarnate archangel Michael and is "a god" not equal to Jehovah but is a created being whom God used to create the earth.
- Jesus Christ has divine attributes, but is only god-like.
- The Holy Spirit is not a person, but a force.

## 2. JW's deny bodily resurrection of Jesus

When Jehovah raised Jesus from the dead as "glorious spirit creature" and his body dissolved into gaseous form - raised a spirit-being, not a physical being.

## 3. JW's deny salvation by grace for all who believe in Christ

- Salvation is by faith **and** what you do (*Studies in the Scriptures, Vol. 1, pp.150,152*)
  - Obedience to God's law.
  - Be associated with God's channel, His theocratic organization.
  - To loyally advocate His kingdom rule to others.
- Salvation is split into two classes of people:
  - I. The "anointed" class composed of 144,000 who alone will go to heaven as spirit sons of God. Only this class are the ones who are "born again."
  - II. The "great crowd" who will be resurrected on earth and will have the chance to live in new heaven and new earth after the great Armageddon.
- There is no hell, but instead teaches the "annihilation of the wicked."

## 4. Other JW beliefs

- All "religions" besides JW's are of the devil.
- Blood transfusions are a sin (*Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1985, pp. 72-73*)
- They also refuse to vote, or celebrate Christmas or birthdays. They are not allowed to serve in the armed forces.

When Jesus finally returns physical to earth, which will happen at the time of the Battle of Armageddon, He will set up his earthly 1000 year kingdom. During this 1000 year period, people will be resurrected and have a second chance to receive eternal salvation by following the principles of Jehovah's Organization on earth known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. After the millennium, those who reject God and His organization will be annihilated; that is, they will cease to exist.

The rest of the Jehovah's Witness who have faithfully followed God's organization on earth will be saved from eternal annihilation and reside forever on Paradise earth.

Heaven, however, is a place for a special group of 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses - the only ones who are "born again" and have "immortal life," all other Witnesses have "everlasting life." Those with immortal life do not have resurrected bodies. They have "spirit bodies." Those on Paradise Earth have everlasting life and consists of a resurrected body that must be maintained through eating, rest, etc.

### The JW's challenge to the deity of Christ:

Encounters between Christians and Jehovah's Witnesses typically revolve around a discussion of the deity of Christ. This is the area where Watchtower theology deviates most dramatically from orthodox Christianity. JW's have been taught to believe that God the Father alone is "Jehovah," the only true God; that Jesus Christ is Michael the archangel, the first angelic being created by God; and that the Holy Spirit is neither God nor a person, but rather God's impersonal "active force."

A good first step - ask the question, "Is Jesus Christ really an angel?" Jesus Christ is "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14, NWT) and is "far above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name named, not only in this system of things, but also in that to come" (Ephesians 1:21, NWT).

Scripture clearly teaches that the Son of God is superior to the angels. The entire first chapter of Hebrews is devoted to this theme, especially verses 6-7. "And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, Let all Gods angels worship him" (v. 6).

Angels consistently refuse worship ("Be careful! Do not do that! ...Worship God" Revelation 22:8, 9, NWT), but the Fathers command concerning the Son is, "Let all Gods angels worship him" (Hebrews 1:6). That is how the Watchtowers own New World Translation read for some 20 years until, in 1970, the Society changed it to read "do obeisance to him" instead of "worship him"

### Some arguments from Scripture

I. *"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given ... Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6).* JW's teach that Jesus is a 'lesser god', not the Almighty God, Jehovah.

But the same Hebrew word is used of Jehovah - *"The remnant will return ... to the Mighty God" (Isa 10:21) "The Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts" (Jer 32:18).*

II. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).* The NWT translates this "...and the Word was a god", saying that there is no definite article before the Greek word 'Theos' (God). Actually, in the whole NT the word 'Theos' appears 282 times without the def. artl., and only 16 of these (6%) are translated consistently with their stated principle of translation. Even in the first 18 verses of John there are 8 occurrences of 'Theos', and only two have a definite article, but the NWT has not consistently followed their precedent set in verse 1.

Ask if Satan is a true god or a false God. The Jehovah's Witness will say a false god. Then have them read aloud John 1:1 again in their Bible and ask them if Jesus is a true god or a false one. If he says "true god," he's in trouble because that would make Jesus true God -- which the JW's do not believe. If he says "false god," he's in trouble because that would make Jesus a false God.

If Jesus is a god, then doesn't that mean there are two gods? They often answer, "Yes. But Jesus is not the Almighty God, He is only the mighty god. And besides, there are those in the Bible who are called gods but really aren't."

III. *"... out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2). "... from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psa 90:2).* The Hebrew word "everlasting" in both these verses are the same, one ascribed to the eternal nature of Jehovah, and the other to the eternal nature of Jesus Christ.

The word 'Kurios' in the New Testament is translated Lord and Jehovah inconsistently in the NWT, according to the bias of the Watchtower translators. A good example is found in Romans 14:8-9 – IV. *"For if we live, we live to the Lord (NWT:'Jehovah'); and if we die, we die to the Lord (NWT:'Jehovah'). Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (NWT:'Jehovah'). For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord (NWT: Lord) of both the dead and the living"*

V. *"But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God **worship** (NWT: 'do obeisance to') Him (Heb 1:6).* The word worship in the New Testament is translated inconsistently in the NWT to avoid ascribing worship to Jesus Christ. The same word translated 'do obeisance' when applied to Jesus Christ in the NWT, is translated 'worship' when applied to Jehovah - *"Then Jesus said ... 'You shall **worship** the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve' " (Mat 4:10).*

### A biblical response to some of some of the JW's favourite challenges

- **Why did Jesus pray to the Father? (John 17).**

Because as a man He needed to pray to the Father.

Because He was both God and man (Col. 2:9; John 8:58 with Ex. 3:14).

The Jehovah's Witnesses simply ignore or change the Scriptures that reveal the divine-side of Christ and concentrate on those that describe His human-side.

- **Why did He say the Father was greater than He (John 14:28)?**

This is because His position was different than that of God, not His nature.

Heb. 2:9 - Jesus is made for a little while lower than the angels; that is, when He became a man.

- **Why did He say, "Why call me good, only God is good?" (Luke 18:19)?**

Jesus was confirming His own deity because what He was doing was good. Ask them, "Was Jesus good?"

- **Why did Jesus say that He could only do those things that He saw the Father do? (John 5:19)**

This is an interesting verse and it is one that proves the divinity of Christ, not that He wasn't God.

Who can do the same things God the Father can do? Could an angel? Could a man? "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

- **Jesus is the first created being so He can't be God**

**Col. 1:15** "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."

The Jehovah's Witnesses maintain that "firstborn" means first created. This cannot be the case because...

There is a Greek word for "first created" and it is not used here.

"First born" is proto ("first") with tikto ("to bring forth, bear, produce").

There is no word used in the New Testament for "first created." However, if there were, the construction would be proto ("first") with ktizo ("to create)". And this is not the construction used in Col. 1:1

Firstborn can certainly mean the first one born in a family. However, it can also mean preeminence. For example:

In Jeremiah 31:9, the firstborn title is attributed to one of the tribes of Israel. "*Ephraim is my firstborn son.*" In Psalm 87 David is called firstborn with the parallelism indication the preeminent place he had. A number of the patriarchs were not first to be born but received the firstborn status!

## **Jehovah and Jesus in OT and NT**

### **Both Jehovah and Jesus are worthy of the same status**

Isaiah 12:2, 43:11 ~ Luke 1:47

### **Both Jehovah and Jesus receive same reverence**

Isaiah 45:22-23 ~ Philippians 2:10-11

### **Both Jehovah and Jesus are worthy to receive honor and glory**

Revelation 4:11 ~ Revelation 5:12

### **Both Jehovah and Jesus have the same names and titles**

#### **I. Jehovah**

Exodus 20:2-3 Deuteronomy 32:39 Isaiah 41:10, 43:10, 44:6, 44:8, 45:5, 44:22

1 Corinthians 8:4-52

#### **II. God**

Matthew 1:23 John 1:1, 20:28 Hebrews 1:8 1 Timothy 1:17

#### **III. Lord**

Luke 2:11 Romans 10:12-13 Deuteronomy 10:17 Jeremiah 32:18

#### **IV. First and Last**

Revelation 1:17, 2:8, 22:13 Revelation 1:8 Isaiah 44:6, 48:12

#### **V. I Am**

Exodus 3:14 Deuteronomy 32:39 Isaiah 44:6, 48:12 John 8:58, (Same Greek phrase as John 8:24, 13:19, 18:5)

## **VI. King of King, Lord of Lords**

Deuteronomy 10:17 Psalm 136:2-3 Daniel 2:47 1 Timothy 6:15 Revelation 17:14, 19:16

## **VII. Rock**

1 Corinthians 10:4 Psalm 18:31

## **Both Jehovah and Jesus perform the same acts**

Acts 2:32

### **I. The resurrection of Jesus**

John 2:19 10:17-18

### **II. Created heaven & earth/all things**

Genesis 1:1 Isaiah 44:24, 45:12 Revelation 4:11 John 1:3 Colossians 1:16

### **III. Forgives sins**

Psalm 65:3 Isaiah 43:25 Jeremiah 31:34 Luke 5:20-21 Mark 2:7-9

### **IV. Hears prayer**

2 Chronicles 7:14 John 14:14

### **V. Judges all**

Genesis 18:25 Psalm 96:13 John 5:22 2 Timothy 4:1

### **VI. Raises the dead**

John 5:21(a) John 5:21(b)

## **Both Jehovah and Jesus have the same attributes**

### **I. Eternal "from time indefinite"**

Isaiah 9:6 Micah 5:2 John 1:2 Psalm 90:2

### **II. Omnipresent**

Psalm 139:7-12 Matthew 18:20, 28:20

### **III. Omnipotent**

Isaiah 45:5-13 Matthew 28:18

### **IV. Omniscient**

1 Kings 8:39 Jeremiah 17:9,10,16 1 John 3:20 Matthew 11:27 Luke 5:4-6 John 2:25, 16:30, 21:17

### **V. Immutable (does not change)**

Malachi 3:6 Hebrews 13:8

## **The Holy Spirit**

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the Holy Spirit is an active force like radar or electricity, only it's God's active force. If the Holy Spirit is simply a force then...

1. Why is He called God and can be lied to (Acts 5:3-5)?
2. How is it that He can teach (John 14:26)?
3. How can He be blasphemed (Matt. 12:31,32)?
4. How can be the one who comforts (Acts 9:31)?
5. How is it possible for Him to speak (Acts 28:25)?
6. How then can He be resisted (Acts 7:51)?
7. How can He be grieved (Eph. 4:30)?

8. How can He help us in our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26)?

**Witnessing to JW's**

Most take the direct approach - to tell them that they are in a cult and need to get saved. Most immediately set out trying to prove the Trinity doctrine. This approach fails miserably because the Watchtower Society has trained JW's to close their minds to such arguments.

Christians assume that, shown the appropriate Bible verses, the JW will get the point. But the Watchtower Society's mind control blocks any interpretation other than that supplied by them.

A Christian needs to take a completely different approach –

First, it is necessary to avoid being pushy or confrontational. JW's are trained to seek out people who will listen to them. They are instructed to terminate discussions with those who want to disprove Watchtower doctrines. It is better to let them think that they are teaching you.

A good approach is, "OK. Help us understand this passage." This is a tactful way to get them to follow your plan rather than theirs, without them becoming defensive. Try to find points of agreement such as "one God." Acknowledge that you agree with them when possible.

In most cases when you begin with Bible doctrines you get caught into an endless 'Bible verse ping-pong'! Logically persuasive arguments do not persuade the JW. The organization's stranglehold on the individual's mind must first be broken before effective teaching can be done from the Bible.

Use questions instead of arguments. JW's are trained to help humble people who have questions. Soft-pedal the conclusions. Let the weight of evidence force JW's to reach a conclusion in their own minds.

Start with common ground, and help JW's reach conclusions step-by-step.

1. Ask questions that demonstrate that the Watchtower Society is a false prophet.

Challenge the authority of the Watchtower.

***"Only this organization functions for Jehovah's purpose and to his praise. To it alone God's Sacred Word, the Bible, is not a sealed book."*** (Watchtower; July 1, 1973, pp. 402.)

The Watchtower Society regard themselves as the "faithful and wise servant" of Matthew 24:45. They have been "assigned to dispense timely spiritual food" (The Watchtower, March 15, 1990 quoted by Kern, p.42) to the others in the movement. These will merit a special reward (Matthew 24:46-47).

The Society justifies this stance by twisting scriptures, especially 2 Peter 1:20-21 and Acts 8:30-31. They use the passage in 2 Peter to contend that no individual must ever try to interpret or figure out what the Bible is saying on his own. But the Greek word for interpretation is *epilysis* which means "unloosing." The prophets did not loose these prophecies by themselves (privately). The verses in Acts 8 are used to argue how the eunuch could not understand until God's servant showed him the truth.

Question for your JW acquaintances: "If the Watchtower is the only true servant of God and the only means of really understanding God's word and God's will, and they did not come into existence until the late 1800's, does this mean God had no representatives on earth for many centuries?"

JW's have implicit faith in the Watchtower organisation as "God's visible theocratic organisation on earth". Even the Bible itself has no authority in itself for the JW, only as it is interpreted correctly by the Watchtower Society.

The simplest way to destroy the JW's blind allegiance to their organisation is to show from their own literature and from the Scriptures that the Watchtower is a false prophet. The test of a true prophet of God is 100% accuracy. Yet 100% of the Watchtower prophecies have failed to come to pass!

**2.** Ask questions that help JW's see that salvation depends, not on an organization, but on JESUS CHRIST. Also, that Christ deserves obedience as our Lord. JW's need to stop following the organization and must turn to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

**3.** Once JW's begin questioning the Watchtower Society as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture, get them to read the Bible for themselves, praying for Jehovah to reveal the truth to them personally.

The Watchtower Society uses the Bible, but only to support their own beliefs.

There are only two ways of looking at Scripture. Either you can start with what you believe and force the Bible to line up with your predetermined belief or you can accept the Bible as the only authority, and change your beliefs to be in harmony with it.

### **QUESTIONS TO ASK JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

**Question 1:** If Jesus isn't God, why does God the Father command all the angels to worship Him?

The Bible teaches that only Jehovah should be worshipped: "You shall worship the Lord (Jehovah) your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:10). Yet in Hebrews 1:6 God says concerning His Son: "Let all God's angels worship Him".

The Kingdom Interlinear Translation reveals that the same Greek word translated "worship" when referring to Jehovah (in Matt.4:10) is translated "obeisance" when applied to Jesus (in Heb.1:6). But the original word is the same and should not be weakened just to fit their doctrine.

God alone is to be worshipped (Rev.22:8-9). To honour any created being with worship, no matter how high in the created order that one may be, is nothing less than idolatry.

Jesus accepted worship from men (Matt.28:9,17, Luke 24:52, John 9:38). If Jesus were not God, to accept another's worship, would be a grave sin deserving the judgement of God (Acts 13:21-23, Rev.22:8-9).

Worship means, among other things, to honour in the highest place. Jehovah will not share His glory with any other being (Isaiah 42:8, 48:11) yet Jesus prayed "Glorify me, alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside You before the world was" (John 17:5 N.W.T.). Jesus said that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father (John 5:23), and to fail to honour the Son is to fail to honour the Father.

These verses do not explicitly say that Jesus is God, but the implication is abundantly clear for an honest and unbiased student of the Scriptures. They support the Bible verses that clearly teach that Jesus is God, such as John 1:1 "...and the Word was God".

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

**Question 2:** If Jesus' body was not physically raised from the dead, how could He prophesy that it would be raised and not be a liar?

The Watchtower Society claims that Jesus rose spiritually from death, but that His actual body was not raised.

However, in John 2:18-22, Jesus spoke of His body as a temple (v.21), and clearly stated that His body would be destroyed (crucified) and raised again in three days (v.19). If His body was not raised Jesus was a liar, or was Himself deceived.

The same body which was crucified was the one that was raised to life. The Bible shows this by:

- \* The wound marks of the crucifixion in His resurrection body, which would have been deceiving and dishonest were it not His body (John 20:25-28),
- \* The appearance of Jesus in "flesh and bone" (Luke 24:39),
- \* His eating food (Luke 24:43),
- \* He was seen and touched by many witnesses (Matt.28:9, 1 Jn.1:1),
- \* The clear teaching of the apostle Peter (Acts 2:24-31).

Either the Lord's prophecy in John 2:19 was wrong, or the Watchtower Society is wrong. You must choose which to believe.

The Watchtower Society's interpretation of "raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor.15:44) does not stand, when compared with the above Scriptures, as these clearly show Jesus' resurrection body to be physical. Nevertheless, Jesus' resurrection body was spiritual, in that it could suddenly appear in a locked room and could go into heaven, which our physical bodies are not able to do (1 Cor.15:50). Other times when Paul uses the word spiritual in the same book, he is still referring to something physical (1 Cor.10:3-4).

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in Salvation by Grace.

**Question 3:** If we must earn acceptance before God, how can we be saved by grace?

All agree that man has sinned and is not automatically accepted before God. However, the Watchtower Society teaches that people must earn God's favour by living a righteous life and witnessing for Jehovah. Only as a person lives a life worthy of the Lord and believes what the Watchtower Society dictates, can he find acceptance before God.

But the Bible teaches otherwise:

1. We cannot earn God's favour or acceptance by our good works or righteous living:

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."

Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy."

Romans 3:20 "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the Law rather through the Law, we become conscious of sin."

2. We cannot be accepted before God on the basis of our own effort and God's grace at the same time.

Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works if it were, grace would no longer be grace."

Galatians 2:21 "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing."

Romans 4:4-5 "When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

3. Christ did not just die as a ransom for Adam's sin, He died as a sacrifice for our sins.

1 Corinthians 15:3 "Christ died for our sins."

1 Peter 2:24 "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

4. The only way for us to be accepted before God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:22-24 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified (made acceptable before God) freely by His grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

**Question 4:** Since Jehovah will not share His glory with any created being (Isaiah 42:8, 48:11), how could the Lord Jesus Christ say to the Father: "Glorify Me alongside Yourself with the glory that I had alongside You before the world was." (John 17:5 N.W.T.). How could the angels, the elders and the living creatures ascribe glory to the Lord Jesus (Rev.5:12)?

**Question 5:** Do you believe that God is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps.90:2)? Do you also believe that Jesus Christ is from everlasting? Micah 5:2 uses the same Hebrew word "everlasting" - "whose going forth is from everlasting." Isaiah 9:6 says: "His name shall be called...the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father".

**Question 6:** How can the Watchtower Society be right when they teach that Jesus' body was not raised from the dead? Jesus Himself said that His body would be destroyed by the Jews and then His body would be raised again on the third day (John 2:19-22). The resurrection body of the Lord Jesus was not a "spirit" body, for He said "It is I Myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39).

**Question 7:** The Watchtower organization has claimed to be the prophet of God (The Watchtower, April 1, 1972, p. 197) yet it has made numerous false prophecies. The excuse given for their false prophecies has been to quote Proverbs 4:18 which says, *"But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established."* Whether or not the "light gets brighter" or not does not change the fact that the Watchtower made false prophecies. The Bible says in Deut. 18:20-22, *"However, the prophet who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet must die. And in case you should say in your heart: "How shall we know the word that Jehovah has not spoken?" When the prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah and the word does not occur or come true, that is the word that Jehovah did not speak..."*

If the NWT condemns false prophesying and states that it is proof that God is not speaking through that prophet, then doesn't this prove that the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society is not speaking for God?

**Question 8** How can one trust the NWT when there are so many blatant mistranslations to suit the JW doctrines?

Why does the New World Translation insert the word Jehovah in the New Testament when there are absolutely no Greek manuscripts that have it in there? Isn't this playing with the text?

**Col. 1:15-17** in the Jehovah's Witness Bible has an addition of four words: *"all [other] things* (They maintain that they know it isn't in the original Greek Scriptures but the word is implied and should be there.)

Instead of refuting the bad translation, simply ask them if this means that Jesus created everything. They will say yes. Review this and be very clear and get them to admit that it was Jesus who created everything. Then turn to...

Isaiah 44:24 *"This is what the LORD says -your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself."*

If Jesus created everything, then why does it say that the Lord (Jehovah in the Hebrew) did it by Himself?

Ask them to try to read the section of verses and omit the word "other".

**John 8:58** in the Jehovah's Witness Bible says, "...Before Abraham came into existence, I have been."

The present tense "I am" ('ego eimi'), has been changed into the perfect tense: "I have been". Jesus was purposely using the divine title: I AM of Exodus 3:14.

If Jesus was saying that He "had been" before Abraham, then why do the Jews respond by picking up stones to kill him? The answer is simple: They knew He was claiming to be God. (Another time the Jews picked up stones to stone him, they gave their reason: *"for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."* John 10:30-34)

I. Dr. Julius Mantey who co-authored A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament said, "I have never read any New Testament so badly translated as The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures. In fact, it is not their translation at all. Rather, it is a distortion of the New Testament.

II. Dr. Bruce M. Metzger, the late professor of New Testament at Princeton University called the NWT “a frightful mistranslation” and also used words like “erroneous,” “pernicious,” and “reprehensible” in describing it;

**Points to remember:**

1. Recognise that it is a spiritual work, and only with prayer, agape love, and God’s Word will the eye’s of Satan’s victims be opened.
2. Remember that they are schooled and intensively trained to counter all our arguments, but like Goliath, they have areas where their armour will not protect them.
3. Be ready to share your testimony, and speak of the assurance of your salvation based on What Christ has done alone.

**Preparation to share the Gospel with a Jehovah’s Witness**

1. Recognise that it is a spiritual work, and only with prayer, agape love, and God’s Word will the eye’s of Satan’s victims be opened.
2. Remember that they are schooled and intensively trained to counter all our arguments, but like Goliath, they have areas where their armour will not protect them.
3. Be ready to share your testimony, and speak of the assurance of your salvation based on What Christ has done alone.

**BASIC STRATEGY (though not a hard and fast rule)**

1. Challenge the authority of the Watchtower.

JW’s have implicit faith in the Watchtower organisation as “God’s visible theocratic organisation on earth”. Even the Bible itself has no authority in itself for the JW, only as it is interpreted correctly by the Watchtower Society. Christians certainly have no authority, as their religion is of Satan.

The implication is that any discussion of Bible verses will prove a fruitless exercise (humanly speaking) unless their confidence in the Watchtower Society is first (kindly but firmly) shaken.

2. The simplest way to destroy the JW’s blind allegiance to their organisation is to show from their own literature and from the Scriptures that the Watchtower is a false prophet. The test of a true prophet of God is 100% accuracy. Yet 100% of the Watchtower prophecies have failed to come to pass!
3. Reason from Scripture that Salvation is a free gift of God’s Grace based upon the unique person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Share your testimony, stressing your assurance of salvation based on the Person and work of Christ.

**Some arguments from Scripture**

*“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given ... Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6).* JW’s teach that Jesus is a ‘lesser god’, not the Almighty God, Jehovah.

But the same Hebrew word is used of Jehovah - *“The remnant will return ... to the Mighty God” (Isa 10:21)* *“The Great, the Mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts” (Jer 32:18).*

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).* The NWT translates this “...and the Word was a god”, saying that there is no definite article before the Greek word ‘Theos’ (God). Actually, in the whole NT the word ‘Theos’ appears 282 times without the def. artl., and only 16 of these (6%) are translated consistently with their stated principle of translation. Even in the first 18 verses of John there are 8 occurrences of ‘Theos’, and

only two have a definite article, but the NWT has not consistently followed their precedent set in verse 1.

*"... from everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psa 90:2).*

*"... out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2).* The same Hebrew word "everlasting" in both these verses are the same, one ascribed to the eternal nature of Jehovah, and the other to the eternal nature of Jesus Christ.

The word 'Kurios' in the New Testament is translated Lord and Jehovah inconsistently in the NWT, according to the bias of the Watchtower translators. A good example is found in Romans 14:8-9 - *"For if we live, we live to the Lord (NWT:'Jehovah'); and if we die, we die to the Lord (NWT:'Jehovah'). Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's (NWT:'Jehovah'). For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord (NWT: Lord) of both the dead and the living"*

*"But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God **worship** (NWT: 'do obeisance to') Him (Heb 1:6).* The word worship in the New Testament is translated inconsistently in the NWT to avoid ascribing worship to Jesus Christ. The same word translated 'do obeisance' when applied to Jesus Christ in the NWT, is translated 'worship' when applied to Jehovah - *"Then Jesus said ... 'You shall **worship** the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve' "* (Mat 4:10).

### **3 QUESTIONS JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES CANNOT ANSWER**

Very few people who start studying with the Jehovah's Witnesses have sufficient knowledge of the Bible to challenge the Watchtower's teachings and interpretation of the Scriptures.

The Watchtower Society uses the Bible, but only to support their own beliefs. When a Bible passage does not agree with their doctrines, they interpret the Word of God to suit their preconceived ideas. For example, when Scripture clearly speaks of 144,000 Jews, and specifically shows that this number is made up of 12,000 people from each tribe of Israel (Rev.7:4-8), the witnesses refuse to accept the plain statement of the Word of God, and spiritualize it. They say that God is speaking about "spiritual Israel" who are the special "anointed class" Jehovah chooses from among His "Witnesses" to go to heaven and reign with Christ. But the passage gives no hint of such an interpretation.

There are only two ways of looking at Scripture. Either you can start with what you believe and force the Bible to line up with your predetermined belief or you can accept the Bible as the only authority, and change your beliefs to be in harmony with it.

While you read this leaflet, you have to make the choice. Are you willing to change your beliefs when they do not fit Scripture, or will you force the Bible verses to say what you want them to say, in order to support your own (or the Watchtower's) belief?

There are three crucial areas of belief where it is clearly apparent that the Watchtower Society have superimposed their own beliefs over what the Bible teaches. To challenge their beliefs we will ask three questions to which they have no answers. No doubt they will put forward answers, but can only do so by distorting the plain meaning of the Word of God (2 Peter 3:16).

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that Jesus is God who became a human.

Question 1: If Jesus isn't God, why does God the Father command all the angels to worship Him?

The Bible teaches that only Jehovah should be worshipped: "You shall worship the Lord (Jehovah) your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:10). Yet in Hebrews 1:6 God says concerning His Son: "Let all God's angels worship Him".

The Kingdom Interlinear Translation reveals that the same Greek word translated "worship" when referring to Jehovah (in Matt.4:10) is translated "obeisance" when applied to Jesus (in Heb.1:6). But the original word is the same and should not be weakened just to fit their doctrine.

God alone is to be worshipped (Rev.22:8-9). To honour any created being with worship, no matter how high in the created order that one may be, is nothing less than idolatry.

Jesus accepted worship from men (Matt.28:9,17, Luke 24:52, John 9:38). If Jesus were not God, to accept another's worship, would be a grave sin deserving the judgement of God (Acts 13:21-23, Rev.22:8-9).

Worship means, among other things, to honour in the highest place. Jehovah will not share His glory with any other being (Isaiah 42:8, 48:11) yet Jesus prayed "Glorify me, alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside You before the world was" (John 17:5 N.W.T.). Jesus said that all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father (John 5:23), and to fail to honour the Son is to fail to honour the Father.

These verses do not explicitly say that Jesus is God, but the implication is abundantly clear for an honest and unbiased student of the Scriptures. They support the Bible verses that clearly teach that Jesus is God, such as John 1:1 "...and the Word was God".

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Question 2: If Jesus' body was not physically raised from the dead, how could He prophesy that it would be raised and not be a liar?

The Watchtower Society claims that Jesus rose spiritually from death, but that His actual body was not raised.

However, in John 2:18-22, Jesus spoke of His body as a temple (v.21), and clearly stated that His body would be destroyed (crucified) and raised again in three days (v.19). If His body was not raised Jesus was a liar, or was Himself deceived.

The same body which was crucified was the one that was raised to life. The Bible shows this by:

- \* The wound marks of the crucifixion in His resurrection body, which would have been deceiving and dishonest were it not His body (John 20:25-28),
- \* The appearance of Jesus in "flesh and bone" (Luke 24:39),
- \* His eating food (Luke 24:43),
- \* He was seen and touched by many witnesses (Matt.28:9, 1 Jn.1:1),
- \* The clear teaching of the apostle Peter (Acts 2:24-31).

Either the Lord's prophecy in John 2:19 was wrong, or the Watchtower Society is wrong. You must choose which to believe.

The Watchtower Society's interpretation of "raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor.15:44) does not stand, when compared with the above Scriptures, as these clearly show Jesus' resurrection body to be physical. Nevertheless, Jesus' resurrection body was spiritual, in that it could suddenly appear in a locked room and could go into heaven, which our physical bodies are not able to do (1 Cor.15:50). Other times when Paul uses the word spiritual in the same book, he is still referring to something physical (1 Cor.10:3-4).

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in Salvation by Grace.

Question 3: If we must earn acceptance before God, how can we be saved by grace?

All agree that man has sinned and is not automatically accepted before God. However, the Watchtower Society teaches that people must earn God's favour by living a righteous life and witnessing for Jehovah. Only as a person lives a life worthy of the Lord and believes what the Watchtower Society dictates, can he find acceptance before God.

But the Bible teaches otherwise:

I. We cannot earn God's favour or acceptance by our good works or righteous living:

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."

Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy."

Romans 3:20 "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the Law rather through the Law, we become conscious of sin."

II. We cannot be accepted before God on the basis of our own effort and God's grace at the same time.

Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works if it were, grace would no longer be grace."

Galatians 2:21 "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing."

Romans 4:4-5 "When a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness."

III. Christ did not just die as a ransom for Adam's sin, He died as a sacrifice for our sins.

1 Corinthians 15:3 "Christ died for our sins."

1 Peter 2:24 "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

IV. The only way for us to be accepted before God is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:22-24 "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified (made acceptable before God) freely by His grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Jesus prophesied that false prophets would arise and deceive many people. Unfortunately, those who are deceived become convinced they are right in what they believe. The only method to test whether or not you have been deceived, is to expose your beliefs to what the Bible clearly teaches. You must do this with raw honesty and unwavering sincerity. Get alone with God's Word and nothing else. Refuse to read any literature, whether Watchtower Society or Christian, until you have allowed God to show you from His Word alone what you should believe.

The motive behind this tract is not to win an argument, but to challenge the beliefs of those whom we know from Scripture have been led astray. In love, we ask you to reconsider what you believe and why you believe it.

Jesus said: "Unless you believe that I Am, you will die in your sins...before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8:24, 58, compare Exodus 3:13-15).