

Cults

(Rev. 05/25)

This section is included to give you an overview of cults. To begin with, though, we need to define what a cult is:

Cult - *Cultism means the adherence to major doctrines which are pointedly contradictory to orthodox Christianity (Source: Rise of the Cults)*

In other words, these are people who claim to be Christians; who may reference the Bible, God, or Jesus; but who deny critical parts of doctrine. (In other words, they claim that Jesus is just a man, or there are multiple “gods”, or the Bible is only one of many “sacred” books, etc.)

Please note that some of these groups DO consider themselves to be “Christians”, even though their doctrines differ.

7th Day Adventists

- 1843 William Miller predicts that Jesus will return. (Jesus doesn’t return...)
- There is some debate over whether he called for 1843 or 1844.
 - At this time, the group is called “The Millerites”.
 - After this, the Millerites disbanded, due to the “Great Disappointment”.
 - Some of Miller’s followers claim to have visions that showed that Jesus had entered into the heavenly temple, even though He didn’t return to earth. In other words, Miller was right.
- 1844 Ellen G. Harmon, receives her first vision. She unites the Adventists.
- 1846 Ellen marries James White.
- 1847 Ellen G. White receives a vision that confirms celebrating the Sabbath on Saturday.
- She will have over 2,000 visions in her life. (Adventists consider Revelation 19:10 to be a reference to Ellen G. White’s writings.)
 - She writes 10,000 pages of prophetic material, including “The Great Controversy” which describes the war in heaven.
 - She write to restrict eating meat. (Adventists are vegetarians.) Adventist John Harvey Kellogg – founder of Kellogg’s cereal – makes corn flakes to try to get people to stop eating meat for breakfast.

Key Differences:

Adventists can range from almost orthodox, including proper views of Jesus, God, Satan, sin, etc.; to dangerously off-base. (The more Biblically-based groups ARE saved by faith in Christ alone!) Only by talking with specific groups can you determine which views they have. Some of the more “problematic doctrines” include:

1. Name is based on the “advent” (imminent appearance) of Jesus Christ.
2. Satan is a scapegoat that bears the sins of believers.
3. Some of White’s visions got rid of the idea of Hell and embrace soul sleep – the belief that the

soul sleeps after death until called for final judgment – and annihilation – the belief that unbelievers are extinguished after judgment.

4. Jesus is identified as the archangel Michael. This doctrine denies the true nature of Christ.
5. For many Adventists, the writing of White are equal to – if not greater than – the words found in the Bible.

In closing, all Seventh-Day Adventists should seriously consider the following: a recognized prophetess in their church was a teacher of aberrant doctrine, and their church has its roots in the failed prophecies of William Miller.

Christian Science

- 1821 Mary Baker Eddy was born.
- She is sickly, depressed, and has a severe temper as a child.
- 1866 Eddy is severely injured. She turns to the Bible to “discover” laws of spiritual healing.
- 1879 Eddy writes her book, Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures.
- In that book, Eddy says that “Christian Science is unerring and Divine” while the Bible has been corrupted and contains “manifest mistakes.” (Source: The Gospel Coalition)
 - Eddy goes on to found a college, a church, a publishing enterprise, and the respected newspaper “The Christian Science Monitor.” (Source: Gotquestions.org)
 - Eddy and two dozen followers found the “Church of Christ (Scientist)”.
- 1892 The “church” changes its name to “Church of Christ, Scientist”.
- 1910 Mary Baker Eddy dies from multiple diseases, even though she claimed that she could heal people.
- Despite her claims, no real doctor was ever able to validate a single healing.

Key Differences:

1. Christian Science rejects the authority of the Bible, claiming that it’s full of errors.
2. Christian Science rejects the Trinity and believe that Jesus was just a man, not God. His spirit is considered infallible, but they believe when Jesus was a man he was not “the Christ”. They also think that Jesus was born because of Mary’s “spiritual thoughts of life and its manifestation”.
3. Christian Science also believes that sickness is simply an illusion and comes from living apart from God. If you become convinced that there is no sickness, you are healed. Because of this, they argue that there are no miracles in the Bible.
4. Christian Science denies that Jesus actually died and rose again. Instead, Jesus was hiding in

the tomb. He had used the “power of Spirit” to overcome physical death. Also, he didn’t die for our sins; he died to show us how terrible sin is and how to avoid paying for it!

5. Christian Science denies the existence of evil. They believe that Satan isn’t real.

In closing, you have a cult that is neither “Christian” nor “Scientific”. Christian Science cannot perform miracles, and none have ever been proven. The rest of their theology is the creation of one woman who rejected the Bible and created her own religion.

Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW’s)

1799 The “Last Days” begin. (The Harp of God, 1928)

1870 Charles Taze Russell organized his first “Bible Study” in Pittsburgh.

1874 Jesus starts being present with “His people”. (The Harp of God)

1878 Jesus starts ruling in Heaven. (The Harp of God)

1876 Russell is elected “pastor” and rejects almost all of the central Biblical doctrines. This includes:

- The deity of Christ.
- The Trinity
- The physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- Eternal punishment for sin.

1879 Russell founds Watch Tower magazine.

1884 Russell founds the Zion’s Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society

- This will publish seven books called “The Millennial Dawn”, six of which were written by Russell, that explain their belief system.
- “The Millennial Dawn” series will be renamed “Studies in the Scriptures” to make them more acceptable to Christians.
- Shortly after this, Russell faces scandals due to libel, perjury, divorce, etc.

1914 Armageddon predicted.

1916 Russell dies.

- J. F. Rutherford “The Judge” takes over the group.
- There is an immediate divide between Russellites and those who follow the new leader.

1929 There’s a split in the organization due to Rutherford’s rejection of some of Russell’s ideas. After this, the organization attempts to distance itself from Russell. Russellites form a group called “The New Dawn”.

1931 Rutherford calls the group “Jehovah’s Witnesses”.

Key Differences:

1. The Trinity is a “false doctrine promulgated by Satan for the purpose of defaming Jehovah’s name”.
2. Jesus is “a second god” or simply “a god”, but He was created BY God.
3. Jesus was the archangel Michael before he came to earth. While on earth, Jesus was only a perfect man who earned immortality by obeying Jehovah’s commands.
4. Jehovah’s Witnesses believe salvation is obtained by a combination of faith, good works, and obedience.
5. Jehovah’s Witnesses claim that the church has corrupted the Bible over the centuries; thus, they have re-translated the Bible into what they call the New World Translation. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society altered the text of the Bible to make it fit their doctrine, rather than basing their doctrine on what the Bible actually teaches. The New World Translation has gone through numerous editions, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses discover more and more Scriptures that contradict their doctrines.
6. The Watchtower bases its beliefs and doctrines on the original and expanded teachings of Charles Taze Russell, Judge Joseph Franklin Rutherford, and their successors. The governing body of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society is the only body that claims authority to interpret Scripture. In other words, what the governing body says concerning any scriptural passage is viewed as the last word, and independent thinking is strongly discouraged.
7. One of the quirky beliefs for Jehovah’s Witnesses is the name: Jehovah. In the Bible, the God of Israel, gives us His name, “YHWH”. (The Bible usually writes this as LORD.) Unfortunately, the Jews stopped saying God’s name due to fear of misusing it, so we don’t know how to pronounce it. What we DO know is that the Hebrew language has no “J” sound...so you can’t actually say "Jehovah". (The Germanic tribes, centuries later, gave us the first true “J” sound!)
8. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have called for Armageddon on eight separate occasions: 1877, 1916, 1920, 1938, 1942, 1961, 1966, 1984. After 1942 (?), they announced that Christ HAD returned in 1874, but was in hiding until the right time.

In closing, the Jehovah’s Witnesses think that salvation is NOT through Jesus Christ, it all comes down to works, and it’s based on a Bible and beliefs that have had to be rewritten on a fairly regular basis!

Mormons (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)

- 1805 Joseph Smith, Jr. is born in Vermont
- Born into poverty.

- Spent part of his early life dabbling in the occult.
 - Spent part of his life treasure hunting – specifically looking for Captain Kidd’s treasure.
 - Became a “glass looker” - charged people to read their futures.
 - People who knew the Smith family described them as “destitute of moral character” and “addicted to vicious habits”.
- 1827 Joseph Smith claims that an angel called “Moroni” leads him to Golden Discs
- He also shows him the Urim and Thummin, magic glasses that help him to read the discs.
 - Smith claims that the book was written in “reformed Egyptian”...a language that does not exist.
 - Much of the Book of Mormon turns out to be a plagiarized adaptation of the KJV.
- 1829 Smith returns the golden plates to the angel Moroni.
- His translation is called the Book of Mormon.
 - Smith claims that God and Jesus showed up to tell him that all other churches were an “abomination”.
 - Smith is to use the Book of Mormon to restore “true Christianity”.
 - Also, the Book of Mormon is used to “expand” the Bible, and often contradicts it.
- 1844 Smith is arrested after trying to destroy a press that spoke against him.
- While in jail, a mob stormed the building and shot Smith and his brother.
 - Brigham Young takes over as leader of the church. (He has 27 wives and 56 children.)
- 1846 Mormons begin the move out west to find a new home.
- 1847 Young becomes second church president and the Mormons arrive in Salt Lake City, Utah

Key Differences:

1. First, the Mormons believe that God has not always been the Supreme Being of the universe, but attained that status through righteous living and persistent effort. (Source: Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith) They also believe that God has a body of flesh and bones. (Source: Doctrines and Covenants)
2. Brigham Young taught that Adam actually WAS God and also the father of Jesus Christ. However, later “revelation” has shown that this is false.
3. Mormons believe that there are basically three levels of “Heaven” and one level of “Hell”. Where you end up depends on what you believe, how well you believe, and what you do in this life. (Source: Mormon Doctrine and Articles of Faith)
4. Mormons believe that Jesus was born through a sexual relationship between God the Father and Mary. (Source: Journal of Discourses) Further, they believe that although Jesus is “a god”, any human can also become a god. (Source: Doctrine and Covenants)
5. Since its publication in 1830, the Book of Mormon – what Joseph Smith called “the most correct of any book on the earth” - has had nearly 4,000 changes made to it. Some of them

were grammatical or typographical, while others are much more significant.

6. Some early “church fathers” declared that black people’s souls, before they were born, were not as virtuous as white people’s souls. While most people didn’t accept that, both Joseph Smith and Brigham Young reasoned that black skin was a curse – either the Mark of Cain or the Curse of Ham. Because black people were cursed by God, it was reasonable to accept slavery. However, in 2013, the church realized that these beliefs were wrong.
7. Another practice that is distinct is polygamy.

In closing, the Mormons base their faith on a book that has been proven false and that they, themselves, have had to revise and update on a regular basis. Furthermore, their religion is solely based on the words of one man and what he claimed to have received. There is no archaeological evidence for the cities that Smith claimed existed, no trace of the language he references, and no proof to be shown.

Scientology

- 1953 Failed science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard creates Scientology
- In his words, the purpose was to “Make Money, Make More Money, Make Others Produce So As To Make Money”

Key Differences:

1. According to Hubbard, we are immortal, alien beings called Thetans.
2. Man is trapped by matter, energy, space and time. (MEST)
3. To be saved, we need to “audit” our “engrams” - remove memories of past pain that creates an energy blockage. This process is lengthy and can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to be done properly.
4. Thetans are constantly reincarnated until they can learn to control MEST, not be controlled by it.
5. The only “Scriptures” allowed in Scientology are written by L. Ron Hubbard.
6. Scientology is very strict when someone tries to leave it. There are allegations of abuse, kidnapping, psychological torture, being discredited, loss of all contact with family and friends, and more.

In closing, this is the purest example of a true cult. People are brought in because of the promises of health and happiness, and then forced to remain in the cult through threats and punishments.

Other Groups Worth Researching:

- Jim Jones (1978)
- Branch Davidians / David Koresh (1993)
- Heaven's Gate (1997)

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