

An Analysis Of Some Of The Cults Which Are Likely To Disturb Our People

[Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary April, 1983]

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I. CULT RELIGION: CHARACTERISTICS AND APPEAL

The pathologist performs an autopsy. The sights and smells are not particularly pleasant. The subject of this post mortem attention will not be healed through the pathologist's knowledge and skill. But what is learned from the autopsy may save lives in the future, even the lives of those who are the offspring of the deceased.

A study of the cults is a kind of *exercise in pathology*. The sights and sounds are not pleasant. There is a decided smell, of brimstone. But what is learned may contribute to the prevention or cure of spiritual sickness in those who are confronted, attracted, or ensnared by a religious group which might lead them into the service of false gods, away from the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, into the cultivation of a false righteousness and other great shame and vice. We hope that the analogy of the autopsy breaks down here, that someone who is already spiritually dead may be awakened as an indirect result of what is to be presented in these five lectures. That must be the only justification for spending so much time on what occasionally entertains but never edifies.

What is a cult? People who belong to cults do not know or acknowledge that they are involved in cults. The word as used in the modern American language is a pejorative and no one is ready to accept the aptness of a pejorative as applied to himself. One person's cult is another person's truth and ideal life style. Any application of the term is bound to be colored by the presuppositions of the person who refers to another as a cultist.

In its neutral sense and etymologically, cult simply means religion or worship. The word *cultus* is still used as a fancy term for a religious system or for worship. The word culture derives from it and reminds us that culture is supposed to be the living expression of what a people believes.

But in modern American usage the word cult has been applied to what is outside the mainstream of the culture, what deviates from what most people believe. And that's where presuppositions enter in and we become subjective in our definition of the term and our application of it to a religious group. Then a cult becomes "any movement that is weird, sinister, authoritarian, incomprehensible to (me.)" A slightly more objective definition would be: "Cults are groups which reject conventional consensus and espouse very different views of the real the possible, and the moral." That is what most people think the world is about, what can happen, and what is right—that, they reject and follow beliefs of their own.

We immediately realize that in the minds of many people we come under either of these definitions. "Weird," "authoritarian," "incomprehensible," "different" are all words that have been applied to Christians and Lutherans and members of WELS. We also espouse views that are different from those of the prevailing culture. Whole-hearted commitment and the attempt to win others are characteristics for which we would want to be labeled as cultists.

So, acknowledging our presuppositions and in an attempt to be objective from our Christian and biblical point of view, *let us describe cults in this way*: All cults have a false basis of salvation and a false basis of authority. Most of them try to isolate their adherents from the outside world and seek to control outside information. Most of them are esoteric, imparting "insider's information" through step-by-step revelation. Many engage in the economic exploitation of their adherents and of outsiders.

It is the *false basis of salvation* which, *most concerns us* and which we recognize as the underlying cause for all other aberrations of cultists. The ultimate basis of salvation in all Cults is man himself. Through

denial of sin and guilt, through self-righteous attitudes and activities, through self-deification, or through a combination of these, people are taught to seek salvation or spiritual wholeness in themselves.

In the western world the figure of Jesus is almost always acknowledged by cultists, often appealed to, and thus exploited in some way. The authority of the Bible is usually acknowledged in formal way and often exploited by misuse. But of no cult can it be said that the Holy Scriptures are the sole source and standard of its teaching, or that Jesus Christ is the all-sufficient and only Savior. Jehovah's witnesses espouse the formal principle of the Bible's authority but teach an Arian Christ on the basis of their New World Translation and their clever manipulation of Scripture passages. The Latter Day Saints list the Bible first among their standard works but teach a gnostic Christ on the basis of their other Standard works and the continuing revelation of their presidents. Reverend Moon and his Unification Church of Christianity grant the Bible an authoritative position but preach a failed Christ on the basis of Moon's revelations. Mary Baker Eddy's followers honor the Bible with their lips but the Jesus of the Bible is really expendable in their system. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, founder of Transcendental meditation, quotes the Bible (or misquotes it) when it suits his purpose but directs people away from the Christ of the Bible to their own innate divinity.

In those homegrown American cults that sprang from Protestantism there are *certain distinctive traits* which recur in almost every instance. These traits are present in those 19th century Cults which have by now gained affluence and respectability. Those traits also appeared in the person and movement of James Jones who gave Kool Aid such a bad name.

What are those traits or characteristics? There is a charismatic founder who has a highly personal philosophy of salvation or spiritual health. He or she makes an abrupt break with historic Christianity and its creeds. The followers are happy and proud to be separated from the "apostate" visible Christian churches.

To emphasize and encourage separation from and hostility, to the world and to Christianity there is a tendency to major in minors, to concentrate on a number of matters which the Bible regards as peripheral or adiaphorous. There are strange doctrines reserved for the enlightened and/or secret rituals reserved for the worthy.

There is a tendency to perfectionism that breeds self-righteousness, with little awareness of personal sin or guilt. Walter R. Martin cites the example of Christian Science in this connection: "Christian scientists sometimes appear to be almost immune to the conviction of personal guilt as a result of sin. Guilt implies the threat of judgment and a standard which is the basis of that judgment; hence the reality of the concept of sin which is transgression of the law of God. Christian Scientists desperately want only a 'good' world, a pleasant place full of happiness, life, love and security. This they can have only if they deny the empirical evidence of the opposite of those concepts. In effect they affirm the reality of 'good' at the expense of the antithesis of 'good,' as if by denying the existence of evil one had annihilated evil." The other cults are Pelagian, with no facing up to man's inherent sin or his potential for evil.

In every instance the homegrown American religions which sprang from Protestantism rely on extra-scriptural authorities. Someone has said, "They carry the Bible in their left hands." That is, additional writings, new and continuing revelations, or the dicta of the leader supersede the Bible's authority. The Bible must be augmented, corrected, or explained according to the leader's system and worldview.

To the cultists the founder or his successors in leadership are virtually infallible. To cite a recent example, James Jones's authority was not diminished but enhanced when he claimed, successively, that he was a medium of disembodied spirits from other galaxies; then a reincarnation of Jesus, Buddha and Lenin; finally, a manifestation of the deity. For such people to formally affirm the deity of Christ, as they all do in some way, is a mocking lie.

There is, in those cults which survive for more than a generation, a strong organizational structure which ensures that absolute authority will remain in the hands of the founder or the founder's successors. There is little doubt that this strong leadership and provision for control by one or a very few is one of the chief characteristics of cults which make it possible for them to survive.

The group is encouraged to think of itself as the exclusive community of the saved. Its members expect to play a central role in eschatology. This even works out for Christian Science that does not believe in the end of all things or in the final judgment. Christian Science places itself at the very center of eschatology by teaching that the rise of Christian Science *was* the Second Coming of Christ.

As you all know, these cults (except for Christian Science) are vigorous in their proselytizing. They are especially vigorous and too effective in proselytizing, among members of Christian churches.

The literature on these groups is abundant and all present know something of their history, doctrines and practices. There is, however, a second current of cultism that is also likely to trouble at least some of the people in our congregations. We will also, therefore, offer a few generalizations regarding these *newcomers and their traits*.

Like Christianity, they come from the East. The similarity stops there. Those that are not actually eastern religions have at least been influenced by or are adaptations of eastern systems. Some claim not to be religions. Some assert that they are atheistic. Others are pantheistic, equating God with the forces and laws of the universe. In the words of Stephen Gaskin, founder and leader of The Farm: “God is the agreement of all the monkeys.” Or they are monistic, believing that ultimately there is no distinction between matter and spirit, Creator and creature. Again, we hear from Stephen Gaskin of The Farm: “God is the ALL and we are the ALL. There is no outside entity.”

We shall not hear again from Stephen Gaskin or The Farm during the course of these lectures. However, complete his syllogism, which has as its premises that God is ALL and we are ALL. You must conclude: “Therefore, we are God.” In one way or another and in surprisingly bold language that is what many or most of the eastern imports and adaptations do teach. The God within, progress toward deity, the divine potential in every human being or in select human beings—this is the theology of the cults that draw on or represent eastern religion.

These groups, like most cults, are usually led by a charismatic individual. They are not concerned with the revelation of God from outside themselves but concentrate on discovering and developing the God inside themselves. Obviously, the Bible is not adequate for such teaching and creeds are irrelevant to it. Experience is the reliable source of knowledge and understanding. Meditation, fasting, in some instances the use of drugs provide or enhance such experience.

Often, but now always, there is a withdrawal from the world, even a denial of its objective existence. When the world is only an illusion and existence itself may be an illusion, there is little concern with history; science is replaced by pseudoscience; sometimes there is a deliberate irrationality – most notably in Zen Buddhism.

Marriage and the nuclear family are downgraded. Attitudes toward sex range from strict asceticism to libertinism. There is a long history of vulnerability and scandal in sexual matters among cultists, especially among founders and leaders. Power corrupts.

Emphasis on the basic or potential divinity of human nature has one result that might be expected. As in those cults which had their beginnings in American Protestantism, so ‘ in eastern religion there is no facing up to the inherent sinfulness of human beings or their capacity for evil. As a matter of fact, the self-centeredness that they encourage in their devotees seems to make them oblivious to the commandment “Love thy neighbor.”

We will provide a few specifics and name a few names in later lectures. We will refer again to these general characteristics in that connection.

How much of all this does trouble the Christians in our congregations and how seriously should we take *the proliferation and success of the cults in our time*? The answer must vary from locale to locale, as must the specific identity of those cults that are likely to disturb our people. I trust that this series of lectures on an unhappy topic was not requested as a mere academic exercise. The homegrown cults have carried on their depredations in the flock of every pastor here, one ventures to say. Any pastor, who works in a community of any size, has parishioners who have at least had some contact with the newer cults. Even if we do not lose members or hear from anguished parents what has happened to their sons and daughters, we may be sure that

cults are disturbing our people. It is the devil's business to disturb our people and he is using the cults to do that. The church has had to contend with cults from the beginning. To the Christians of his day, Peter wrote: "... There will be false teachers among you. They secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up (2 Pe 2:1b-3a)."

University of Chicago anthropologist Irving R. Zucetsky estimates that "20 million Americans ... are involved in 'fringe religious groups.'" He adds that the number may be larger. Rabbi Steve Robbins, chairman of the Task Force on Cult and Missionary Action for the Jewish Community has been striving for ten years or more to keep young Jews out of the cultic web and to extricate those who have been caught. He was quoted in *Christianity Today*: "We are running to catch up to a reality that has staggered our imagination, shaken our conceptions of what religion is, and even what human beings are."

The Mormons are now the fifth largest religious body in the United States. They are the fastest growing. Jehovah's Witnesses are the second fastest growing group. Seventh Day Adventists (who at least bear many of the marks of a cult) are the fifth fastest growing religious group in this country.

What are some of the *reasons for the proliferation and success* of the cults in our time? One answer, too simple but too true, is that there are a lot of gullible people. Shakespeare said it more forcefully in "The Merchant of Venice":

"In religion
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament."

Some analysts point to the decline of churchly authority. They cite the apostasy of the liberal churches. They score the way in which more conservative churches emphasize the past and the future to the neglect of the present, the now. They mention the apparent inability of the churches to prevent or stem the breakdown of the family. They point to the increasing secularism, the this-worldliness, of many great religious institutions, notably the Roman Catholic Church.

It is difficult to sort out cause and effect. In fact there seems to be a demonic spiral of cause and effect and cause and effect and cause and effect. Beyond a doubt, this is an increasingly secular age. But man is inherently religious and when biblical or traditional religion is swept out there is an empty room and seven devils rush in to occupy that empty room. G.K. Chesterton said it: "When a man ceases to believe in God, he does not believe in nothing. He believes in anything." As Paul wrote to Timothy: "... The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. *Instead*, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tm 4:3-4). This *is* an age of itching ears, a great number of teachers *have* gathered, and myths *abound*.

Some analysts of the cult scene point to disillusionment with America: the assassination of popular leaders in the sixties, the attempted assassination of presidents since then, the war in Viet Nam, a limping economy, nuclear proliferation, the ecology crisis. The malaise which President Carter once described is real, they say. There is future fright, a national loss of nerve. And so, in the computer age, vast numbers of people turn to astrology charts. They use Tarot cards and practice other rank forms of superstition in an age when everyone is too intelligent to accept the Bible as God's Word. Popular movies, television shows, even comic books regularly project the message of mysticism and the occult on which many of the modern cults are based. Mystic exercises and psychedelic drugs offer a reality beyond what the senses can perceive, a world beyond this material realm. The affluent, and especially their children, are more interested in new experiences than in new clothes or new cars.

It seems, too, that the prevailing doctrine of biological evolution plays a role. People who are conditioned to accept that absurdity are able to move on to the absurdities of spiritual evolution and reincarnation which especially the eastern religions and their cultic offshoots teach.

The success of the large and fast growing cults can, also be traced to a zeal for sharing their beliefs and lifestyle and a willingness to endure ridicule which puts us to shame. Their founders and leaders have used the printed word effectively and have been masters at public relations, at manipulating the media to their purposes. They have inculcated dedication and a strong sense of urgency in their followers. They have provided their adherents with definite techniques for witnessing and programmed material for Bible Study. Numbers and growth rates, political clout and vast wealth are impressive.

All cults offer what Sydney Ahlstrom calls "harmonial" religion. That is, they promise spiritual composure, physical well being and economic advantage to those who learn their secrets and get in touch with the cosmos or the Creator of the cosmos. To the Christian they say: "My universal worldview encompasses your narrow world view." In every case they dismiss the offense of the cross by dispensing with the need for Christ's sacrifice or by denying its efficacy and sufficiency.

Why do individuals find the cults appealing? We are told that most recruits are not seeking religiosity so much as they are seeking a better and more fulfilling way of life. Those who find that or imagine that they have found it usually get around to embracing and espousing the religious doctrines of the cult as well.

Part of the appeal of cults is that they give their adherents a sense of family, of fellowship, when these have been lacking. Members feel that they are known and needed. They perform necessary functions within the group and may be allowed to progress to roles of importance in the organization. The devil knows, too, that it is not good for man to be alone and he is always busy finding a place for people where they do not have to be alone. From his perspective, much better to find them a home in a cult than have them feel loved and appreciated and needed by Christians.

Many people join cults for the reason that monastics used to enter hermitages and coenobitic communities: to escape from an imperfect Christian community where they have not been able to cope with the challenge of living in a sinful world. Or, they simply seek to escape a complicated world and find security in a supportive organization which will provide for them and even make their decisions for them.

Then, there is the religious desire for absolutes. A new revelation and the authoritarian figure who interpret the new truth provide relief for those who are sick of relativism and the vagaries of liberal Christianity. To be in contact with God and his will, to receive a detailed code of behavior and to be held to it, to receive specific advice in moral issues---these things afford a sense of security, however false it may be.

The aggressive proselytizing cults, the energetic fundraising cults, also provide an outlet for those who are inclined to action. Sacrifice of time and money, enduring ridicule, meeting quotas can be very gratifying to a certain kind of individual, especially if he believes it is done for God and for his own salvation.

Even the more passive eastern cults offer some of this appeal. Three necessary elements in Hinduism and its offshoots and imitators are *sangha* (friendship), *dharma* (teaching), and a *guru* (a one-on-one spiritual director).

Not to be overlooked in all of this is the natural inclination of sinful man. He would rather create a god in his own image than to be recreated in the image of God and conformed to the image of Christ.

What are some of the characteristic *methods and approaches* which cults use to attract the unwary and the vulnerable? It is more difficult to generalize here, but the successful cult leader is an effective advertiser and a master of public relations. Consider the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, especially when it is accompanied by the Philadelphia Orchestra. Consider Sun Myung Moon's contacts with government officials, which are interpreted as endorsements of his message, whether the senator has any notion what that is or not. Cult analyst Ronald Enroth predicts that Moon's Unification Church will be as widely accepted fifteen years from now as the Latter Day saints are today. Even Jehovah's Witnesses have become masters of the great rally in some arena or stadium, winning the approval of the media for the good cleanup job they do and their general orderliness, if nothing else.

The fastest growing cults are those whose emissaries are clean-cut and friendly, going where the people are rather than waiting for people to come to them. They frequently refer to themselves, in the beginning, by some innocent name such as “Bible Students.” Their literature, when they distribute it, will likewise often be unmarked or not identified with the recognizable name of the cult. They invite their prospects to join them in Bible study or to attend a lecture—sometimes with a meal as an incentive. They use the terminology of historical Christianity and may be masters of the evangelical cliché. They will be critical of denominational Christianity and offer to help the prospect discover for himself what the Savior and his apostles really taught. They will quote the Bible selectively, or out of context or from their own translation. They promise a more rewarding way of life, power for abundant living. They withhold information regarding the degree of commitment that will be required of the prospect if he follows their lead. In short, they engage in deceptive advertising practices.

In 1974, “flirty fishing” for souls was adopted as the primary evangelistic strategy of David Berg’s Children of God, who are known today as the Family of Love. Women of the cult were instructed in detail to attract men to the group or entice them to support the group by paying the women for sexual favors.

Who is vulnerable to the attractions of the cults that to Christians and to most “ordinary” people are so unattractive? The answer seems to be “People who are not ordinary.” As with all such generalizations, this one may be overdrawn. There certainly are exceptions and what is not ordinary among us in this room is increasingly ordinary in American society. However, Robert J. Lifton describes the phenomenon of wholehearted cult commitment in this way: “(It is) the coming together of immoderate ideology with equally immoderate individual character traits—an extremist meeting ground between people and ideas.” His use of the word immoderate seems to suggest that people who are unbalanced or temporarily off balance are likely subjects for cult indoctrination and the complete turnabout that that involves.

Always keeping in mind that we must be moderate in our generalizations, we will list some traits that have been observed in cult converts. They are between 18 and 25 years of age, from middle class homes, asserting their independence in a bizarre way. They have been alienated from family and society before their involvement with the cult. They come from broken homes or from homes where the father was ineffective. If lover discipline and religious training were not carried out by the parents the way is open for surrogate parents or authority figures. Any religious training they may have had came from liberal churches or synagogues. New Christians with no training in doctrine or weak Christians who are biblically illiterate are especially vulnerable, even if their church experience has been with conservative churches. Limited knowledge of Scripture with high respect for Scripture renders them vulnerable to those who twist Scripture. Many have recently suffered emotional trauma, such as the death of a loved one, the breakup of a romance, or the downfall of a hero. Very many have been drug experimenters or drug users.

To sum up, the cult fills a spiritual, social or emotional void—often in time of crisis—which church, family and society have not been able to fill. That is probably true even of the “good kid,” the model young citizen who was never in trouble and never even seemed to question authority or openly challenge any of the beliefs of his parents.

How do the cults hold their recruits and make them effective tools in the cult’s program? Rev. Moon’s Unification Church of Christianity is not typical in the sense that most cults follow a training regimen like his. But the Moonie regimen does contain elements that appear in modified form in the *training methods* of groups. Let us describe the so-called brainwashing that takes place in the training of a Moonie.

The process is gradual and it begins with behavior rather than belief. First, there is the controlled milieu. During a two-week adjustment period the recruit is kept on an exhausting schedule of group activity, lectures of controlled conversation, and very little time for relaxation. There is limited opportunity to sleep, no opportunity to be alone—even to go to the bathroom. A low-protein diet coupled with the lack of sleep, results in a general weakening and even a degree of disorientation. The recruit is isolated from other recruits and from contact with the outside world. This isolation is not enforced by locks or straitjackets but by the schedule itself and the constant companionship of cult members. During the two-week period and later the recruit is warned

against the misguided efforts of parents, spouses, or friends who may try to win him away from this wonderful new life. The fledgling cultist is taught to regard, family and friends as agents of Satan, who wants to deprive them of the truth and of the joy of righteous living. As time goes on, the new cult member will, of his own accord and gradually, cease all correspondence and communication with people from his old life.

The second ingredient of cult indoctrination is what Lifton calls “mystical manipulation.” The recruit must become convinced of the group’s high purpose and of the responsible role he is to play in carrying out that purpose. This is accompanied by pressure to conform to the group’s lifestyle, the pressure of peer approval and kindness, with occasional admonition and warning. The new member experiences a kind of “high” in the company of people who are so interested in him and who actually importune him to stay and become a permanent part of the group. Increasingly the subject grows dependent on the acceptance and approval of these particular people and especially the leaders. Now he is susceptible to the suggestion that he might want to go home and to his bank and gather his earthly goods and financial assets and turn them over to the group. Also, convinced of the group’s high purposes and eager to please, he is ready to begin selling on the streets for 12 hours a day to help finance “God’s work” as it is carried on by the group.

The third element (and many of these processes are not sequential but concurrent) involves convincing the rookie of the need for pure living. He will learn to disapprove of his former life, to feel guilty about it, to practice a life of abstention from all drug use, a life of celibacy until he is ready to enter an approved marriage, and generally to strive for perfection in living.

The fourth element of indoctrination relates closely to this. The initiate is encouraged to confess the evil of his past life and to acknowledge the shortcomings of his present mindset, which needs much improvement. Especially he must confess his failures to perform as a loyal and productive member of the group.

The remaining elements deal with imparting the new doctrine, the enlightenment of the rookie. The new revelation of the cult and the inspired writings of the leader lend a sacred aura to all that has been happening to him while his behavior was being modified. He begins to use the religious vocabulary of the cult in a way that suggests to outsiders that he is mindless or at least simpleminded. What society calls fraud, for example, he now has learned to call “heavenly deception.” His isolation from the outside world, his involvement with the group, his implication in the group’s antisocial behavior set him apart from the rest of humanity. He is ready to believe that he is special, one of God’s elite, on earth to rescue the world from its folly.

There is no need for the group to lock up such a person. He will stay. There is no point in arguing about whether there is such a thing as brainwashing or whether he has been brainwashed. He has become a different person with a different mindset.

Now, this is the Moonie regimen. But the control of the individual’s time and contacts, the manipulation, the peer pressure, the indoctrination, the new vocabulary, the elitism are there in varying degrees in all cults.

Where do these movements with their promise of wisdom and life and power and even divinity come from? They come from that murderer and liar who said: “You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil ... All this will I give you if you will bow down and worship me.” Denying the power and goodness and truthfulness of the God of the Bible, as Satan did, they manipulate meanings, confuse tongues, and separate people from their Creator and Redeemer. “The devil is an ape,” said Luther. Satan is an ingenious imitator of God’s activity and God’s Word. Again, Luther: “Wherever God builds a church, there the devil builds a chapel.”

Their proliferation and success is a sign of the times, a reminder of our Lord’s early return. 1950 years ago he said: “False Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time (Mt 24:23-24).”

The real test of any religion is the question of Jesus: “Who do you say that I am? The question that tests all religion and separates religion from the Gospel is: “What must I do to be saved?” In the next three lectures we will examine the Christ of the cults: the gnostic Christ, the expendable Christ, and the Christ among equals. I hope that examining their answers to the questions about Christ and salvation will provide a helpful analysis

of most of the cults that might trouble our people. The final lecture, I hope, will offer some practical suggestions as to prevention and cure.

II. CULT RELIGION: THE Gnostic CHRIST

All cults have a false basis of salvation. Whatever may be said in criticism of their peculiar doctrines and their offbeat or sinful practices, it is the false basis of salvation that most concerns US. Who do they say Jesus is? Whose Son is Christ? What must I do to be saved? The answers to these questions are the heart and core of the biblical message. Every part and article of the Lutheran Confessions relate to the central truth of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. All our preaching, teaching, witnessing revolve around this theme.

The cultic answer to the question “Who is Jesus Christ?” is a false answer and in the next three lectures we will examine a number of cults from that point of view. That is to say, historical data, political aims, flawed personalities, sinful and ludicrous practices will be mentioned only in passing. We will try to concentrate on their Christology and soteriology in the hope that people who have learned the Second Article may be led to see that the Jesus of the cults is not the Christ of Scripture.

Cults treat the person and work of Christ in three ways. They downgrade him through gnostic speculation, they ignore him as expendable in their systems, or they regard him as a son of God among many sons of God. Many cult systems embrace two or all three of these approaches.

Today we will take a closer look at the gnostic Christ as he is presented in a number of the cults that are likely to disturb our people.

The gnostic movement that troubled the church in the postapostolic era considered gnosis or knowledge to be superior to faith. Initiates to whom the gnosis was imparted were considered superior to ordinary believers who simply knew their Bible History and trusted God’s salvation. Gnostics used biblical vocabulary but replaced the Bible’s content with speculative philosophical ideas. They used their imaginations and current science to discuss the Greek questions “How?” and “Why?”, to answer what the Holy Spirit has not answered in Scripture. They allegorized and minimized or dismissed the historico-grammatical sense of the Bible.

Their God was an impersonal deity, not the “I AM” of the Old Testament. He was remote, never entering directly into the affairs of men. He was the silent principle of good, with no word of revelation for mankind. They denied the incarnation of God in Jesus of Nazareth and so their interest in the historical Jesus of the gospels was minimal.

They developed a pseudoscience of creation, regarding it as a devolution from the world of divine spirits to an evil material world. The Creator of the Genesis account they dismissed as an inept Demiurge, a blind force that blundered badly in making a world in which there is evil and disease and death. The LORD (Jehovah) of the Old Testament they regarded as a deity inferior to God, with a malign disposition. They considered everything material and physical to be evil, a prison that keeps man from returning to his divine source.

Salvation, then, was an evolution. The spirit of man must be liberated from his body through gnosis, so that he can return to the pleroma, that is, the fullness of God. The result of despising the body was that in some cases they practiced extreme asceticism: deprive the body and thus liberate the spirit. In other cases it resulted in libertinism: use up the body and liberate the spirit in that way.

The gnostic system of Valentinus as present in *The Gospel of Truth* profoundly troubled the church at Rome between 136 and 165, when Valentinus and his followers were finally excommunicated. Your inept reporter will attempt to summarize Valentinus’ system, emphasizing its gnostic Christology and soteriology. Bear in mind as you hear it that Valentinus apparently espoused the formal principle of Scripture, accepting the word of the prophets and apostles as the authoritative word of God.

In eternity there was a series of syzygies (pairings) of the eons (rays of divinity.) For example, the Abyss (or All-Father) joined with Silence to produce mind and truth, who joined together to bring forth word and life, who joined to produce man and church. In all, there were 15 pairings, 30 rays of divinity, who constituted the pleroma (fullness) of the godhead. The harmony of the godhead was disturbed by the unseemly craving of wisdom for the All-Father. The godhead dissuaded her from her inappropriate desire and a new pair

of eons appeared to restore harmony. They were the *Ano Christos* (higher Christ) and the Holy Spirit. This *Ano Christos* is not to be confused with the preincarnate Christ. In grateful celebration of restored harmony all the eons joined to create the higher savior (*Ano Soter*). Again, this *Ano Soter* is not to be identified with the preincarnate Christ.

Now comes Genesis 1. The material universe was created as a result of the union between *Ano Soter* and the mischievous Wisdom. They produced the Demiurge who created people with body and soul but lacking spirit (psychics). The psychics produced Satan, who created hylics (people who lack spirit and soul and are predestined to destruction.) Then occurred the Fall of Genesis 3. The Demiurge sent the *Kato Christos* (lower Christ) to the psychic Jews to instruct them in righteousness. This was Jesus. For one year the influence of the Higher Savior, acting on Jesus, enabled Him to bring gnosis to the pneumatics (those with spirit, capable of receiving gnosis). He also brought faith to the psychics. There was nothing He could do for the hylics because He Himself was not really a material being: here is docetism. Pneumatics, saved by gnosis, will finally attain to the fullness of the godhead. Psychics (saved by faith and works) will ascend to a middle realm with the Demiurge, where they will continue in joyful but uninformed faith. The hylics will be destroyed by fire. Valentinus obviously had lost the Key to the scriptures, which is Christ.

His cult and many others disturbed the Christians of the second century. But gnostic ideas were spooking around before that time. Paul wrote to the Colossians: “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the *stoicheia* of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the *pleroma* of the Deity lives in bodily form (Col 2:8-9).” He wrote to Timothy: “... Command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God’s work—which is by faith (1 Tm 1:3-4).” Again to Timothy: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth (*tois pistois kai epignwskosi ten aletheian* ...). Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales (1 Tm 4:1-3:7).” And again, in the same letter: “Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of *pseudonumou gnwsews*, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith (1 Tm 6:20-21).” 2 Peter and Jude also are concerned with false teachers who exhibited characteristics of gnosticism.

Where did this gnosticism originate? Some of it came from Jewish speculative thought. From 200 B.C. onward, some Jewish thinkers were speaking of a transcendent deity who did not and does not enter into the affairs of men, who had not revealed himself in history. They dabbled with Persian dualism. They were producing extra-canonical creation accounts, such as the Lilith story. Aristobolus taught Philo the allegorical method which the Greeks were applying to Homer and Hesiod and Philo applied it in Old Testament interpretation.

Where else did gnosticism come from? It came from the neopythagorean doctrine of reincarnation, from the neoplatonic depreciation of the material world, from the many mystery religions that were moving from east to west across the Empire. It came from the teachings of Buddha.

Christianity did not originate from these sources as some historical critics have asserted. Gnosticism did not really come from Christianity either. But the Gospel provided gnosticism with a rich new source of material and it was knocking at the doors of the church when Paul wrote Colossians and the Pastorals; it was wreaking havoc among souls in the 2nd-century church. Christian gnosticism was to the early church what the cults are to the church today.

What was *its appeal to Christians*? Much the same as the appeal of various cults in our time. In all of this, remember that we are generalizing.

Gnostic systems and cults have generally tried to deal with the problem of evil in a way that does not accept the biblical account of the Fall as complete. Gnostic systems, cults, and evolutionary speculation have all

adopted novel and extra-biblical views of the world's origin and the world's ordering. In spite of obvious grotesqueries, the gnostics of the second century were striving for and to some degree attaining intellectual respectability. In spite of much in their systems that is not intellectually respectable, modern gnostics do succeed in explaining away (to their own satisfaction) the incarnation and, especially, the vicarious atonement. Gnosticize, and the offense of the cross is ceased.

A mark of many cults which was essential in gnosticism is secretism. Latourette said: "It had the fascination that for so many inheres in a secret disclosed for the privileged few. It professed to be universally incorporating whatever of truth had been disclosed in any of the faiths to which mankind gave allegiance." That, incidentally, is also descriptive of that popular cult known as the Masonic Order.

Then, that ingredient which always appeals to unregenerate man *and* to the Old Adam in Christians: salvation by knowing and doing. Finally, elitism: more than ordinary believers, we are God's special people.

About eighteen years ago an insurance man welcomed me to Madison by inviting me to the breakfast meeting of his service club. He must have functioned well enough as an insurance man but he was a weird man. He was full of whispered information about spirit-writing, spirit-knocking, UFO's, tongues-speaking and prophetic dreams. I am not proud to say that I kept edging away from him and escaped as soon as I could without offering much testimony to the hope that is in me. He was especially excited about a book which completes the New Testament, explains a great deal about current events, but cannot be made available to just anyone.

He told me the name of the book but, although I never forgot him and what he told me about it, I did forget the name of the book. Now I know it again: *The Urantia Book*. It was revealed by spirit dictation to 24 spiritual administrators in 1934. It is 2097 pages long and was published in 1955. It is published by the small, select membership of the Urantia Foundation, a tax-exempt educational (not religious) organization in Cook County, Illinois.

A quotation: "John asked Jesus, 'Master, what is the kingdom of heaven?' And Jesus answered: 'The kingdom of heaven consists in these three essentials: first, recognition of the fact of the sovereignty of God; second, belief in the truth of Sonship with God; and third, faith in the effectiveness of the supreme human desire to do the will of God—to be like God. And this is the good news of the gospel: that by faith every mortal may have all these essentials of salvation.'" End of quotation.

There are many fascinating and entertaining details in this gnostic system, but let us stay with Christology and soteriology. In *The Urantia Book* Jesus is not the eternal Son of God. Christianity's two great errors have been its emphasis on the centrality of Christ and its teaching of vicarious satisfaction. Salvation is by heeding the thought adjuster, that is, the indwelling fragment of God. Our problem, like Adam's, is not that we are sinful but that we are ignorant. As we receive knowledge and direction from the thought adjuster we may attain to salvation by a spiritual evolution. That is, we will progress from our present animal state to the angelic, from the angelic to the spiritual, from the spiritual to the divine.

The gnostic Jesus of *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ*, by Levi (Santa Monica: De Vorse and Co 1972) is not the Jesus of the New Testament. But he would have caught the attention and gained the respect (with a few changes in detail) of 2nd century gnostics, 19th century spiritualists, and modern American cultists—if he had ever existed. He was born in an era when Pisces was the ascendant sign in the zodiac. It was an age of limited spiritual activity and so he could not accomplish much during that inauspicious period when he visited the earth. But now the Age of Aquarius has dawned and it is time for the inner truths that Jesus taught to be revealed. What he taught is that not only was he "christed" or anointed with the potential for self-realization, so are we all "christed" with the potential for self-realization.

In fact we can share in the universal Mind which is really the Christ-consciousness in us which is really the Christ Principle which is really a collection of spiritual laws to bring us to physical and spiritual wholeness if only we obey them. Disease and pain, you see, result from spiritual ignorance; sin is a radical form of ignorance.

Redemption is accomplished through a flash of insight which restores the self's innate purity. It enables all the "christed" to employ the creative powers of the Universal Mind. Atonement is not to be understood in terms of a sacrifice for sin but as atonement with the Universal Mind. Most of this, of course, is essentially a variation on a theme by Mary Baker Eddy.

Our good friend Johannes Valentinus Andreae, who played a key role in achieving the agreement which resulted in the Formula of Concord, once signed a number of letters "A Knight of the Rose Cross." Some historians think he was engaging in a bit of self-deprecating spoofery. Others believe that in his last years he took a serious interest in the speculations of Christianus Rosenkreutz, who lived on this earth for 106 years: 1378 to 1484.

That the church did not celebrate Rosenkreutz's 600th birthday in 1978 is no cause for wonder. He was anti-clerical and really anti-Catholic and his speculative doctrines have been called the ultimate syncretism. He would have been proud to hear that, whether or not it is true. He was literally a renaissance man and tried to be that in the figurative sense, too. Astrology, alchemy, Eastern mysticism and occultism were among the fields in which he moved and that made him a thoroughly modern man for his time.

No doubt, his doctrines have undergone some further development in "the 500 years since his death." Rosicrucianism teaches that the deity is one impersonal being composed of seven spirits and that it is manifested as a triune godhead. The Father is the highest initiate of Saturn, the Son is the highest initiate of the sun (S - U - N), and the Holy Spirit is the highest initiate of the moon. The man Jesus is not to be identified with the Son of God or Christ, but is one in a group that includes Buddha. The cross of the Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rose Cross or the Rosicrucian Fellowship has no connection with the redemption of the world. Rather, it is the sign of man's evolutionary past and his future destiny. "The upper limb of the cross is the symbol of man, because the life currents of the human kingdom pass downward from the sun through the vertical spine." Man is at this time a sort of demi-god, evolving into a divine being. Jesus manifested himself to aid mankind in this evolutionary struggle.

Not all Freemasons are Rosicrucians but some are, and speculative freemasonry has drawn upon the sources that Rosenkreutz provided. There are 100,000 Rosicrucians in the world, in two major bodies, and they do offer information in the Sunday supplements and in national magazines. For that reason they may be among the cults likely to disturb our people, especially since they claim not to be a religion or a church.

Clearly, Rosicrucianism is gnostic denial of the historical Christ and his saving work. As Walter R. Martin says: "There is very little that Rosicrucianism does not seek to enfold within its mythological-magical lore, yet everything Christian that it touches suffers violence at its hands." If someone ever greets you with the password: "May the roses bloom upon your cross," the countersign is: "And on yours also."

The *Book of Mormon* presents a relatively orthodox view of Jesus Christ and his saving work. It is the later Mormon Standard works (*Doctrines and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*), along with the continuing revelations of Mormon leaders that have thoroughly gnosticized the person and work of our Savior for the Latter Day Saints. However, the Book of Mormon is already a gnostic document: it provides answers to questions about 19th century doctrinal issues in ways that Scripture does not answer them; it provides details of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances that are unscriptural; it reports as history events which never took place.

Later writings and prophecies continued the process. Mormon doctrine regards the Fall as something essential and not really a tragedy at all. It is step upward in the development of the human race. In fact, it is only after the Fall that Adam was capable of becoming a god by begetting children.

Mormon Christology has developed in progressive revelation and the development is probably not complete to this day. Alma 7:10 in the *Book of Mormon* says that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. Later Mormon revelation teaches that he is the offspring of God the Father and Mary. The preincarnate Christ was a god among gods, a brother of the devil and to demons. Because procreation is a divine activity and one does not become true God without producing offspring, Jesus was married at the wedding of Cana. He took as his wives Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and Martha, so that "He could see his seed" before dying on the cross.

It was so important for him to beget children, remember, because it is in procreation that men become gods. The interrelation of the Fall upward and of progression toward deity by procreating is summed up in the dictum of President Lorenzo Smith: "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be."

But surely the life and death of Jesus Christ must play an important role in the teachings of the Latter Day Saints who claim to be his only true disciples? What did he accomplish? A single clear answer does not emerge. On the one hand we hear that he made atonement for the sin of Adam *only* and that men are redeemed from their personal sins only through obedience to the teachings and forms of Mormonism. On the other hand we hear that a general redemption of the human race was accomplished by Christ's resurrection. However, this redemption becomes personal only when one believes, repents, and does good works. Again, Mormons teach that there are sins which Christ's blood cannot ever wipe out, for which the sinner must atone with his own blood. This doctrine probably provided justification for the murderous activities of the Danites in the 19th century, when they shed the blood of disobedient Mormons. It also accounts for the fact that a criminal in Utah has an option that no criminal in any other state can exercise. He may choose between death by hanging and death by firing squad. The firing squad will shed his blood and thus effect atonement for sins which Christ's blood sacrifice could not remove.

It is obvious that salvation in the Mormon system is not by grace alone through faith alone. It is by faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the reception of the Holy Ghost. In short, it is by works, by man's obedience. There can be no assurance of eternal life with God except in loyally following Mormon teachings. And one never can be sure he has been sufficiently loyal.

And yet there are four gnostic remedies to assuage any anxiety one may feel regarding his eternal destiny. One: "They who fall short of godhood 'are appointed angels in heaven.'" Two: "God holds the power to pardon beyond the grave." Three: Baptism for the dead will rescue many who would otherwise have been lost. Four: There will be a terrestrial kingdom on another planet for those who are decent but not Mormon. There will be a telestial kingdom where many of the wicked will go after the millennium. Almost no one will go to hell.

A foreign traveler to our land once reported that the United States is a place of confusion. "They have a cereal called grapenuts which contains neither grapes nor nuts. They have a religion called *Christian Science* which is neither Christian nor scientific." With the observation that it is not scientific he was referring to Christian Science's dogmatic refusal to avail itself of medical or pharmaceutical science. His observation that it is not Christian was based on Mrs. Eddy's gnostic treatment of Christ's Person and Work.

Mary Baker Eddy's Christology is unmistakably gnostic. The virgin mother conceived an idea of God and gave it the name Jesus. Her child was the offspring of her self-conscious communion with the divine. The baby, the boy, the man is not God; God is an impersonal principle, infinite mind. This Jesus is not Christ, for Christ is simply the divine ideal.

The resurrection was not the literal raising of Christ's body. It was simply material belief yielding to spiritual understanding. Jesus called his resurrection body flesh and bones as a concession to popular ignorance. He was accommodating himself to his disciples' immature ideas of spiritual power.

Since man derives his being from God he is really incapable of sin and sin is an illusion. Since God is love and since sin is an illusion, it is unthinkable that God's punishment for sin was carried out on his Son or that anyone could be punished for sin. The significance of Christ's crucifixion is not atonement but a demonstration of practical goodness and love. His Second Coming has occurred in the rise of Christian Science. There is no hell for us to be saved from, no final judgment. There is no salvation then, either, for there is nothing to be saved from. By the study of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* we must simply rid ourselves of the illusion of sin and finally pass on to God.

Christian Science has daughters named *Spiritual Science and Church of Divine Science*. She also has a "twin sister" in the *Unity School of Christianity*. A startling aspect of this movement that compels us to take a closer look is that most of its adherents retain membership in their own denominational churches.

Unity does not hold to some of the more radical views and practices of Christian Science. It does not deny that matter exists. It does not “emphasize self-help so strongly as to jeopardize or inconvenience the lives of its adherents.” That is, Unity people are a bit more likely to accept medication and the help of a physician. A woman on her way from Christian Science to Unity once told me: “We believe that C.S. should stand for common sense.”

In the Unity School of Christianity a distinction is made between the man Jesus and the Christ, which is simply God’s thought of man. Jesus is the outer man; Christ is the spiritual identity. The man Jesus was a reincarnation of King David but not God incarnate. He demonstrated the Christ in his life and thus manifested that he was a Son of God. So should we all.

“The ultimate aim of everyone should be to come into a consciousness of the indwelling God.” We develop this Christ consciousness by living the righteous life and—especially by the practice of denial and affirmation: deny the reality -of evil, pain, sickness, poverty, old age, death, fear; affirm the principle of God, our essential unity with him, his will in us.

Whatever thoughts or deeds we leave unfinished in this life will need to be completed in the next reincarnation. Evidence of reincarnation exists in the feeling of *deja vu*: these things really *have* happened in just this way *in another life*. Reincarnation is God’s merciful provision whereby we all have the opportunity to attain to immortality.

Unity is a bit more rational and consistent than her twin sister, but she is still pure gnosticism. Her Jesus is not the Jesus of the Gospels, her Christ is not the Christ of history, her God is not the God of the Bible, her hope is not the hope of the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the son (1 Jn 2:22).”

In another gnostic system Christ was created an angel; the Archangel Michael to be specific. He was a brother of the angel who sinned, Satan. The man Christ Jesus was a perfect human being, nothing more. He did not rise from the dead, not bodily. Since his body was missing from the tomb it may have dissolved in gases, or it may have been supernaturally removed and preserved (dead) as a grand memorial. His spirit rose as a divine being (Michael again), and returned in 1914 as king of the earth. He will not return visibly because he has no body. Those who accept his ransom on the cross are released from the first condemnation and are given a second chance to live an acceptable life. His ransom was an atonement for Adam only and the ransom price was His own annihilation.

This is the gnostic Christ of the *Jehovah’s Witnesses*. This was his saving work according to their speculations.

Many of the people in our congregations have heard about “The World Tomorrow” over the airwaves. Perhaps they have accepted free subscriptions to the glossy and attractive magazine “Plain Truth”. Herbert W. Armstrong and his son Garner Ted Armstrong (who have gone their separate ways in recent years) scorn evolution, chide the higher-critical exegetes, and espouse a morality with which ordinary people are not inclined to take exception. They love America. They deny all past association with or debt to America’s other homegrown religions. The Seventh Day Adventists, however, say: “Mr. Armstrong is an offshoot of an offshoot of an offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.”

It is a fact that the *Worldwide Church of God* does observe the Sabbath and Jewish Holy Days. It prescribes a kosher diet and imposes the tithe on its members. It also draws upon the views of other religions and sects, most fascinatingly on British-Israelism or Anglo-Israelism. A mark of its gnosticism is this eclectic inclusion of many offbeat and exotic religious views. Another is” its reinterpretation of Scripture.

Armstrong’s Christ is somewhat less bizarre than the Christ of other gnostic cults and his soteriology *sounds* more orthodox than most. This probably makes his teaching more dangerous than those of less subtle cult leaders.

He attaches his notion that God is really a “family” or “kingdom” to the plural form of God’s Old Testament name, “Elohim.” The family includes Father, Son, sons, but not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is simply the indwelling Christ and to affirm his personality is to deny Christ.

“The *purpose* of your being alive is that finally you be *born* into the Kingdom of God, when you will actually *be God*, even as Jesus was and is God and His Father, a different Person, also is God. You are setting out on a training to become Creator—to become *God!*”

Now the Armstrongs do not deny the incarnation and they are not docetists. But they interpret the word “flesh” as meaning sinful nature in every instance and that leads to a novel interpretation of John 1:14. “Christ, one of the beings in the Godhead, had now been *changed* into flesh..., having *human nature* with all of its *desires, weaknesses and lusts*—and subject to *death* just like any other human.” in his resurrection he is no longer flesh but a spirit.

What did he accomplish by his perfect life? “Jesus *repudiated* the sway of sin in the human flesh and showed that the law of God *could be kept*.” It was actually Herbert W. Armstrong’s wife who discovered in 1932 that “obedience to God’s spiritual law summed up in the Ten Commandments is necessary for salvation. Not that our works of keeping the commandments save us, but rather that sin is the transgression of God’s spiritual law. Christ does not save us in our sins but from our sins. We must repent of sin, repent of transgressing God’s law which means turning from disobedience as a prior condition to receiving God’s free gift.”

Sir, what must I do to be saved? “Some religious teachers tell you Christ lived a righteous life *for* you 1930 years ago and since you ‘*can’t* keep the law,’ as they claim, God ‘*imputes*’ Christ’s righteousness of 19 centuries ago to you—by sort of ‘kidding himself’ that you are righteous, while you are given license to still be a spiritual *criminal* breaking his law. God does not impute to you something you do not have.

“God’s *purpose* in salvation is to rescue men from *sin and* its resulting unhappiness misery and death! To *repent* of sin is the first step. Then the blood of Christ upon acceptance and faith cleanses of all past sins. And by *faith* we are kept from sin in the future. Thus the resulting righteousness is of *faith*—the righteousness imparted from God.

“We are not justified *by the law*—we are justified by the Blood of Jesus Christ! But this justification will be given only on condition that we *repent* of our transgressions of God’s Law—and so it is, after all, only the *doers of the law shall be justified* (Ro 2:13).”

Notice the constant, subtle, confusing/ “Yea and Nay.”

“We are saved by *grace*, and through *faith*—make no mistake about that; *but*—there are conditions!

“It is *only* those who, during this Christian, Spirit-begotten life, have grown in knowledge and grace, have overcome, have developed spiritually, done the works of Christ, and endured unto the end, who shall finally be given *immortality*...”

Perhaps not all of this qualifies as gnosticism. It certainly does qualify as faith-destroying error that ought to disturb everyone who knows and loves the gospel.

In January and again in June of 1975, for the first time in its history, the New York City Council of Churches rejected an applicant for membership. Their judgment was that the *Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity is not a Christian church*.

The Unification Principle enunciates these aims: 1) unification of mind and heart centered in God; 2) unification of the Christian community through common understanding of Christ’s message of love and the kingdom; 3) unification of democratic nations, ultimately resulting in a unified, God-centered world of love and brotherhood; 4) unification of science and religion which will lead people to the Source of Truth. As Roundy Coughlin of the “Wisconsin State Journal” used to say: “What more could be fairer?”

Who is the Christ of the Unification Church? He is the Logos of John’s Prologue but he took part in creation only in the sense in which *all perfected* men fulfill the purpose of creation. And then things immediately went wrong. Jealous Lucifer, representative of the spirit world, had sexual congress with Eve, a physical being. This resulted in the *spiritual* fall of mankind. The fallen Eve, with newly gained spiritual insight, then seduced Adam in order to regain her position in God’s favor. This resulted in the *physical* fall of mankind for Eve transmitted “Satanic Blood” to Adam and their children. The blood of Satan runs in the veins of all of us. Literally.

Jesus came as the Second Adam to save the race by blood purification or *pikarume*. While Malachi was preparing the Jews for his coming, Buddha and Confucius prepared Asia and Socrates prepared the hellenistic world. All the civilizations were to unite under Messiah's theocratic rule.

The Second Adam came and he was obedient and he intended to save the race by marrying and begetting pure children. He certainly did not come to die. But John denied his Elijah role ("He said, 'I am not Elijah'") and failed to convert his disciples into a power bloc of "Jews for Jesus". That is why Jesus said that the least in the kingdom is greater than John.

Jesus did not give up but directed his efforts to the establishment of a spiritual kingdom. He accomplished that on the cross but really failed as Messiah because he did not secure the world's physical salvation. In spiritual salvation, Jesus is the male element and the Holy Spirit is the necessary female element. *Divine Principle* 215 says: "There must be a True Mother with a True Father, in order to give rebirth to fallen children as children of goodness. She is the Holy Spirit."

Because of Jesus' failure to achieve our physical salvation a Third Adam is needed. This Third Adam is to take a perfect wife and establish God's kingdom on earth. God has sent this Third Adam, the Lord of the Second Advent and he is now completing what Jesus failed to complete. God's plan for our physical salvation includes blood purification (*pikarume*) through perfect marriage.

God's plan also involves the struggle between the forces of Cain and those of Abel. Cain, the son of Satan; the thief on Jesus' left hand; the Iron Curtain countries, and the international communist conspiracy are ranged on the left. Democracy and the free world countries; the thief on Jesus' right hand; and Abel, the son of Adam are on the right. There will be a showdown between those two factions at the 38th parallel in Korea. America will lead in this conflict and must be saved from its folly now so that it is strong then. This must happen very soon.

Second-century gnosticism would be impressed by Sun Myung Moon's eclectic blend of Christian vocabulary, oriental dualism, numerology, popular sociology, spiritualism, ancestor worship, Korean messianism, mysticism, and new revelations. The first revelation occurred on Easter Sunday 1936: "I am Jesus who came 2000 years ago. My mission still remains to be accomplished. In order to realize God's will you must be responsible for a great mission."

Strong meat for a 16 year-old! But Moon has been equal to the challenge. He serves now as "God's Cryptographer," interpreting the Bible in the light of his own writing: *Divine Principle*. There was a dispensation of the Old Testament and a dispensation of the New Testament. We live in the age of the Completed Testament when we can learn things like this: "God has original Sung-Sang and original Hyung-Sang. This is the essence of the perfect Sung-Sang in His personality." Translation: God masculine/feminine, inner/outer, positive/negative.

We shall hear more from Reverend Moon when we discuss the "Christ among equals" in the fourth lecture. Yes.

Many of us remember a college and seminary near Plymouth in Sheboygan County called "Mission House." These were schools of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Today the place is known as Lakeland College. In the late 1930's Mission House had a star basketball player, a farm boy from Ohio, who went on to play with the Sheboygan Redskins in the NBL, predecessor to the NBA. He is probably more of a national figure today than any of his teammates or fellow alumni, but not because of his basketball prowess. He is the founder of *The Way International*.

Victor Paul Wierwille heads a highly organized cult that makes much of having left the organized church. He may not realize that he is gnostic, but he is quite upfront with his gnostic approach. In *Jesus Christ is Not God* page 4, he writes: "We must define our terms. Many people may be misled because while using the same language or words, we don't mean the same things."

His Way Corps Ambassadors, spreading the word over the World (WOW) are a wholesome appearing group who operate with a system of 385 Bible passages which reveal the way to "abundant living": healing, prophecy, tongues, power, overcoming fear.

“What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?” Wierwille says: God is one in essence and he is one Person. The Holy Spirit is the Father by another name. Jesus Christ is a specially created perfect man. His soul or life principle or blood was specially created by God in Mary’s womb. More scientifically (gnostically) God brought a sperm cell into existence to be joined with an ovum in Mary’s uterus. In this way Jesus is the Son of God.

But he is not God incarnate, the God-man, because “flesh is flesh.” And yet he is the Lord and Savior of all who believe. He gave his life to redeem us and the Bible is an accurate record of his life and death. However, his redeeming death was not a sacrifice by God or to God. It was a way-showing.

On those who believe in him the exalted man Jesus confers the Holy Spirit. This is really the impersonal “divinity within,” which was lost in the Fall. This spirit is distinct from body and soul and is the dynamo of “abundant living.” It gives supernatural miraculous powers and is always evidenced by tongues speaking.

The fair imitation of orthodoxy, the midwestern wholesomeness, and the charismatic personality of the leader make the way especially dangerous to “our kind of people.”

In our next lecture we will examine a number of cults for whom Christ is clearly expendable.

III. CULT RELIGION: THE EXPENDABLE CHRIST

It is characteristic of many gnostic cults that they continue to speak with some respect of Jesus Christ even while they interpret away his historical reality and significance. So, for example, he is still named among Jehovah’s witnesses even when an Arian or Unitarian “Jehovah God” is at the center of their system.

In today’s lecture we will examine a number of cults which frankly regard Christ as expendable. We shall group them within four broad categories: those with Christian roots, eastern religions, those which are a synthesis of Christianity and eastern religion, and those which claim to be scientific. We are indebted to Philip Lochhaas of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, for these groupings. We will not be analyzing every cult that might be included in these categories, only those of which we can say they dispense with Christ.

“Watch your life and doctrine closely,” Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tm 4:16). He warned against avarice and lust in the minister. The story of many cults has been the story of a leader who began in relative orthodoxy, was corrupted by the power he exerted over people, exploited his followers financially and sexually, and then began to develop novel and bizarre doctrines to justify his godless life.

A striking present-day example is David Berg who now calls himself Moses Berg, or “Mo” for short. Beginning as a Pentecostal preacher with high ideals, he was forced to leave his ministry in Arizona when he tried to integrate Mexicans and Indians into his all-white congregation. He then embarked on a radio and television ministry and established “soul clinics” in Texas and Florida. In 1968 he and his wife established a coffee house ministry to hippies in Huntington Beach, California and called it “Teens for Christ.” A year later the group was renamed “Revolutionaries for Jesus” and moved to Tucson because the leader was convinced that California was about to sink into the Pacific. During that same year, Berg discarded the wife of his four children in favor of his secretary. The group now became (1969) the *Children of God*, a nomadic, communal, evangelizing group. The group was very successful in helping youthful addicts.

On the other hand, converts were being conditioned to hate their families and in many cases changed their names to thwart any attempt to trace them. The practice of “spoiling Egypt” was introduced. This means street peddling, begging from merchants, extortion from parents, taking over the possessions of converts, and exploiting the food stamp program.

In 1973 Berg taught that Comet Kohoutek would signal the total downfall of America and “the end of things as they now are.” In that same year he issued the famous “Mo-Letter” entitled “Come on Ma: Burn you Bra,” one of a series of missives in which he interprets and prophesies. In it he wrote: “we have a very sexy God and a sexy religion with a very sexy leader—with an extremely sexy young following.” He also propounded the view that sex, like all acts of worship, should be performed publicly.

It was in 1974 that “flirty fishing” became the primary evangelistic strategy of the group. We described it in the first lecture. In that same year Berg left the country just ahead of a probe by the New York Attorney

General's office. An investigator said regarding the "MO-Letters" at that time: "His letters are blatantly pornographic, complete with sketches and diagrams. We didn't even want to reproduce them in our report." The Children of God have undergone another name change and are now the *Family of Love*. Many members left during 1978 because of Berg's autocratic rule, the evangelism by prostitution, an epidemic of venereal disease, and legal difficulties. It is evidently not an easy group to leave; former members say the attrition rate is only 15%.

Berg's moral decay has resulted in doctrinal deterioration. He began as a fundamentalist who accepted the Bible and taught that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ. By now he has taught that he is God's prophet for the endtime, the fulfillment of certain messianic prophecies. He has said: "You could even rebuke the devil in the name of David and he will flee. No power in the world can stand against the spirit of David. The Bible is God's word for yesterday, but the "Mo-Letters" are God's word for today. The Holy Spirit is now regarded as the female member of the Trinity and she is depicted in Family of Love literature as a voluptuous nude. All of this suggests that Berg is no longer even pretending to preach the Savior. Indeed, when he teaches that Jesus had sexual relations with prostitutes and probably had venereal disease he has dispensed in a crude way with the sinless Savior. His is an expendable Christ.

We have, in our brief analyses of a number of cults, already encountered some of the characteristics of eastern religion without identifying them as such. We might list rejection of rationalism and materialism, denial of the existence of evil, the evaluation of everything in terms of subjective experience, the assertion of a reality that goes beyond sense perception and beyond written revelations.

Today, as never before, eastern religions are popular and influential in the western world, particularly in the United States. They seem to have found their mark among students, showbusiness types, and military veterans who have served in the Far East. But one of them has struck a chord of response in a broad spectrum of American society, partly because it denies that it is a religion. The "Spiritual Counterfeit Newsletter" said in 1978: "What McDonald's has done for the hamburger TM has done for eastern mysticism."

TM stands for *Transcendental Meditation*. On the surface it is a technique for attaining composure by going beyond thought. It claims to increase learning ability and job performance, to decrease anxiety and cure some ailments, to slow the body's metabolism and reduce blood pressure, to bring personal happiness and (if everyone would do it) world peace.

Transcendental meditation is one of many yoga (disciplinary) techniques that have their roots in Hinduism. The movement was founded in 1959 by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, in India. He gathered followers in his homeland, then went to London and arrived in America in 1960. He did not enjoy much success before 1967, when Beatle George Harrison discovered him. Other show business types followed the leader and Maharishi became the guru of the famous. Senators Kennedy, Tunney and Bayh were among the many politicians who took training courses in TM.

The movement suffered a brief setback when the Beatles lost interest, but there are today more than 1 million initiates -- 700,000 of them in the United States.

The training program takes one week and costs a week's pay. The meditator is given a mantra, a meaningless phrase or syllable that he repeats during the 15 or 20 minutes of meditation. This is to help him turn inward. The life-style of TM, unlike that of some eastern religions or practices, is active and this-worldly. One strives in meditation to attain "bliss consciousness" or "cosmic consciousness," but then goes to school or to work and achieves.

The yogi's organizations are the Spiritual Regeneration Movement Foundation of America and the Student International Meditation Society. He has a "world plan" for peace that will result when almost everyone has adopted the practice of meditation and has attained cosmic consciousness. In fact, where 1% of the populace in any given area practices TM, there is Utopia.

The "governors" or leaders of the group have taken sidhi training. This enables them to transcend the laws of the material universe. They can levitate, fly, become invisible, walk through walls and exhibit the strength of elephants. It should be added that Maharishi still uses his helicopter.

With the claim that it is not a religion but a beneficial technique for self-control and self-improvement, TM found its way into many educational and rehabilitative agencies. A resolution of the New Jersey Assembly endorsed the movement and its aims: “The objectives of the World Plan are to develop the full potential of the individual, to improve governmental achievements, to realize the highest ideal of education, to solve the problems of crime and all behavior that brings unhappiness to the human race, to maximize the intelligent use of the environment, to bring fulfillment to the economic aspirations of individuals and society, and to achieve the spiritual goals of mankind in this generation.

“The objectives are being pursued through such organizations as the Students International Meditation society, the International Meditation Society, The American Foundation for the Science of Creative Intelligence, and the Maharishi International University (Fairfield, Iowa).”

A similar resolution was introduced in the US Senate by Mike Gravel of Alaska. Presumably it did not get out of committee. An attempt was also made to get a pre-TM resolution through the United Nations Assembly.

In 1975 a Lutheran pastor in California brought suit against the San Lorenzo Unified School District on the ground that it was teaching religion in its schools. TM was being offered as an English elective for credit in San Lorenzo High School. It was an integral part of the physical education curriculum at Bohannon Junior High School. The court declared *Grunow vs. San Lorenzo Unified School District* moot in 1976.

The Spiritual Counterfeit Projects people brought suit in federal court against TM, the federal government, the State of New Jersey and five New Jersey School districts on First Amendment Grounds. After a legal battle of 1 ½ years duration TM was judged religious in nature on October 19, 1977. On February 2, 1979 the United States Court of Appeals affirmed the decision.

Apart from questions of law and decisions of courts, is Transcendental Meditation a religious movement? Its doctrinal teaching is contained in “Science of Creative Intelligence.” It accepts the Veda as the source of all wisdom and truth. It traces its interpretation of the Veda through a succession of authoritative teachers (*guruparampara*). It assigns sacred status to the current master. Like all sects of Hinduism it practices initiation (*diska*) and obeisance (*puja*).

In the initiation ceremony, an offering of flowers and fruit is placed before the picture of Maharishi’s dead teacher whose name is too long for this lecture but whose title is “His Divinity.” The initiators do *puja* (obeisance) with the singing of a Sanskrit hymn that includes these words: “To Shankaracharya, the redeemer, hailed as Krishna and Badarayama, to the commentator of the Brahma sutras, I bow down again and again. At whose door the whole galaxy of gods pray for perfection day and night, adorned with immeasurable glory, preceptor of the whole world, having bowed down to him we gain fulfillment.”

In his book of meditations Maharishi writes: “Transcendental meditation is the path to God,” and “Krishna declares that realization of the state of knowledge is the only way to salvation and success in life; there is no other way.” The-source of his theology is really the monism of the ninth century Hindu reformer Shankar.

Although TM has been endorsed by Christian clergymen as a mere technique, and embraced by many people who have no inkling of its underlying religious orientation there is no doubt that it is a religion. Needless to say, the occasional references to Jesus in Maharishi’s speeches do not hide the fact that for him and his system Christ is expendable.

“Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishnat Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama.” The Krishna movement, one of the dominant forms of modern Hinduism, came to this country from its native India as recently as 1965. In absolute numbers, the large liberal Protestant churches have been the single greatest source of adherents. In proportion to their numbers in the United States, Jews are the richest source: 3% of our population is Jewish but 14.5% of *Hare Krishna* devotees have a Jewish background.

The official name of the group is International Society for Krishna Consciousness, often identified simply with the acronym ISKCON. There are 40 communal centers in this country. At the focal point of worship in all of these temples appears the portrait of A.C. Bhaktivedanta, the Swami Prabhupada who

introduced this form of Hinduism to America. One of its promotional tactics is to offer “mind expansion” information on the back of “Spiritual Sky” incense boxes. “Spiritual Sky,” manufactured for profit by ISKCON, is an incense used by many to mask the smell of marijuana smoke.

Hare Krishna, the Lord Krishna, is the eighth incarnation of Vishnu, the preserver and protector of the world. Vishnu is one member of the Hindu trinity with Brahma the creator and Shiva the destroyer. Krishna is the most widely revered and loved god of the vast Hindu pantheon. He was born in a stable; his birth was accompanied by the appearance of a star; foster parents raised him and protected him from a wicked king. It is very likely that the influence of Nestorian Christianity in India is to be seen in these stories about Krishna and that his name and the name of Christos have been confused.

All Hindus believe that they are avatars, that is, incarnations of souls that have existed in previous lives. What is done in each incarnation becomes part of a person’s karma. One’s karma determines whether he progresses to a higher life form or station in life in his succeeding incarnations or is demoted to a lower life form. This is one reason that Hare Krishnas are vegetarians. It is also why a favorite curse is “May you come back as a stool-eater,” that is, a worm.

The ultimate goal is to escape the cycle of death and rebirth and have one’s jiva (soul) be ultimately absorbed into the divine. The best way to achieve this is by chanting, dancing, and singing—thus to rid your soul of ignorance and bad karma.

Like many cults, the movement in this country attracted dropouts and the alienated, including drug addicts.. The conversion of poet Allen Ginsberg helped capture the attention of the intelligentsia. Beatle George Harrison’s “My Sweet Lord” celebrates the Lord Krishna.

Recruits are trained in ashrams, religious communes, where they get little sleep, partake of a vegetarian diet, abstain from sexual activity, and learn obedience. Not all members are monks, but it is understood that married couples will engage in sexual intercourse only during days of fertility—thus providing future members for the cult. Devotees wear yellow or saffron robes out of respect for Kali, the god of violence and anger, in whose millennium we are living. Men’s heads are shaved, except for a topknot, which the Lord Krishna uses to jerk his disciples to full attention.

Experience is more important than doctrine, but devotees are trained in the 2500 year-old Bhagavad-Gita. They meditate on the karma yoga (path of works), jnama yoga (path of knowledge), and bhakti yoga (path of love) as these are interpreted by the Swami Bhaktivedanta. All great scriptures contain absolute (not relative) truth, but the Bhagavad-Gita is the literal record of God’s actual words.

Part of ISKCON’s appeal to dropouts from our materialistic society is its denial that matter really exists. Matter is an illusion that blinds man to God and one’s own true self. What ails people is not sin but ignorance. We must be freed from our anxieties (which stem from ignorance) by cultivating spiritual science. We do not need to repent of sin (which does not exist) but we do need to renounce our egocentricity.

The need to renounce our egocentricity is obvious when we realize that we are part and parcel with Krishna and therefore we are all brothers and sisters. “Krishna ... means everything and includes everything.” “When you have learned the truth, you will know that all living things are my parts and parcels. (People are) eternal fragments of myself.” This is classic Hindu pantheism.

If you attain to total Krishna consciousness it will drive out all awareness of self, of others, of the world around you. This is the ultimate dropout, of course, but Krishna consciousness is bliss.

Learn from a spiritual master (prabhupada). Offer your food to Krishna before eating so that the food may become Krishna and thus purify you. Do everything as an offering to Krishna, nothing to gratify your own senses. And, especially, chant. Chant “Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, etc.” This is the way to achieve a mature love of God.

Chanting is the very core of religious practice. It ‘is the primary means of witness and the heart of worship. Quoting: “In the age of Kali, the only means of deliverance is chanting the holy name of Lord Hare Krishna. There is no other way. There is no other way. There is no other way.”

“Zen has no God to worship, no ceremonial rites to observe, no future abode to which the dead are destined, and last of all, Zen has no soul whose welfare is to be looked after by somebody else and whose immortality is a matter of intense concern with some people.” These are the words of Shunryu Suzuki, head of *Zen Buddhism* in this country, with headquarters at Tassajara, California and more than 60 temples built within the past few years.

More than any other eastern religion Buddhism is represented in this country by a large ethnic minority: the Japanese-Americans. Zen Buddhism’s attraction and influence, however, has extended to many Americans who are not Japanese or oriental at all. Devotees include former communicants of our own fellowship.

The four sublime truths of Buddhism are:

- 1) Pain is universal
- 2) Pain is caused by desire
- 3) The cure comes through overcoming desire
- 4) This is achieved by following the eightfold path.

The eightfold path is:

1) Right knowledge, 2) right aspiration, 3) right speech, 4) right behavior, 5) right livelihood, 6) right effort 7) right mindfulness, and 8) right meditation.

It is with meditation that Zen begins and some Zen adherents do not concern themselves with the sublime truths and the other seven steps in the eightfold path.

Zen’s leaders claim that it had its origins in India as early as 1,000 BC, apart from Buddhism. Historians believe it originated in the sixth century AD as an offshoot of Buddhism. It became popular in Japan in the 13th century and is actually waning there now. Its foremost popularizer in this country has been Alan Watts. It is much admired by the devils in hell for its atheism, for they know that there is one God and they tremble.

This religion is not to be explained or understood. It is to be experienced. Since we cannot experience it, we will have to try to explain and understand it. Three terms express the essential experience: zazen, satori, and koan.

The word Zen is really an abbreviation of zazen. It means concentrated meditation in the lotus position. The founder of Zen, Bodhidharma, is said to have meditated for nine years, staring at a blank wall. In this sense it is a religion of withdrawal but Zen Buddhists do work for their daily bread. They also accept donations.

The second term, satori, refers to the “third eye,” intuitive insight or enlightenment. This is the goal of meditation. “It is the mystic state in which you appreciate your own original inseparability with the universe.” It is when you break down all dualities of soul/body, right/wrong, matter/spirit, God/man, life/ death. It is understanding your own self and at the same time attaining anatman or “no self.” It is the now, here, this, the “AH! of things.” “He who knows does not speak; he who speaks does not know.”

The third term, koan, refers to what the meditator meditates upon. It is a riddle, a paradoxical problem that exhausts the mind and thus allows the satori to break through. Examples: “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” “What was the appearance of your face before your ancestors were born?” “I owe everything to my master, for he taught me nothing.” Question: “What shall I do if I have nothing?” Answer: “Throw it away.” There are 1700 of these.

Life itself is the biggest koan and one should not try to understand it. There is no need for holy writings, even those of Buddhism. There is no dogma. God is nothing (atheism) or he is all (pantheism). But God is never a person who communicates with us or with whom we can communicate.

There is no need for a savior, really, no need to remedy separation from a God who does not exist. But it is important to understand yourself: “If you wish to seek the Buddha, you ought to see into your own nature, for this nature is the Buddha himself. The Buddha is your own mind.” Obviously Jesus Christ is expendable in a religion that either has no meaning or whose meaning is summed up in this haiku (three-line poem):

“An old pond;
A frog jumps in,
The sound of water.”

Surely, Christ is expendable when Swami Muktananda Paramahansa teaches: “Kneel to your own Self. Honor and worship your own Being. God dwells within you as You.” The cult is *Shree Gurudev Siddha Yoga Dham* and its swami was the teacher of Werner Erhard whom we shall meet later.

A similar view is expressed by Bubba Free John of the *Dawn Horse Communion*. This dropout from a Lutheran seminary teaches a radical monism: “There is absolutely only one Condition, and that is not other than your own Consciousness.” He says and teaches his followers to say: “I am Reality, the Self, and Nature and Support of all things and all beings. I am the One Being, known as God, Brahma, Atman, the one mind, the Self.” Even the devil is expendable in such a creed.

We shall bring only a single brief example of a modern synthesis of Christian and eastern religion in which Jesus Christ is really expendable. The Unity School of Christianity and Christian Science actually belong here, too, but we have discussed them in another context in an earlier lecture.

The three-volume *A Course in Miracles* demotes Christ and defies man in the manner of Gnosticism and eastern religion. It regards evil as an illusion. Only good is real. Therefore we could not have done evil and need no savior. A simplified version of this cult’s doctrine is “Love Is Letting Go of Fear.”

And now, a few pseudoscientific cults.

The term *theosophy* comes from the neoplatonic longshoreman philosopher Ammonius Saikas. He was Origen’s contemporary and teacher. Modern theosophy operates with the eastern concepts of karma, reincarnation and nirvana. The principal written source of theosophy in the West was the gnostic literature of the mystery cult that was devoted to Thrice Greatest Hermes—hermetic literature. In the Middle Ages, Christianus Rosenkreutz expounded and enlarged upon it. In the nineteenth century the Russian mystic Helena Blavatsky made it popular among people in high places. Its American organizer was Annie Besant. The cult wants to be a unifier and peacemaker in religion. It endorses but is not limited to ancient Christian gnosticism.

“God and man are the two phases of the one eternal life and consciousness that constitutes our universe!” God is immanent because he is the universe, although he is more. This universe and a series of universes are emanations from God “as clouds are an emanation of the sea.” That includes human beings. As part of God I have (potentially) all the powers and attributes of the supreme being. The problem is how to realize them.

Man’s spirit is transmigratory and an ordinary being must pass through some 800 incarnations before ridding itself of bad karma. This provides an ethical basis for theosophy that is self-evidently work-righteous: “Be good and you’ll have a better life in your next reincarnation. Perhaps you’ll even lose consciousness after this life and never have to return: Nirvana.” Modern theosophy discusses these doctrines with the vocabulary of evolution rather than that of eastern religion. There is also an appeal to the brotherhood of man in the doctrine that we are all part of God.

The three objects (their word) of the Theosophical Society are:

- 1) To form a nucleus of the universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color.
- 2) To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science.
- 3) To investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

There is no room in such a system for Jesus Christ who fulfilled all righteousness and satisfied the justice of God for us.

Rudolph Steiner left the Theosophical Society in 1913 to form the *Anthroposophical Society*. His doctrines are sometimes known as Spiritual Science. Local groups occasionally call themselves the Christian Occult Society.

Steiner hoped to answer the three big questions: “Where did we come from? Who or what are we? Where are we going?” The answers came from his insights and meditations. He developed his own view of evolution along gnostic rather than Darwinian lines. He believed that the way in which evolution takes place is through reincarnation.

The name Anthroposophy suggests a humannaistic system but the group represents itself as completely Christ-centered. Who is the Christ of Anthroposophy? His uniqueness lies in the fact that he was not a reincarnation and has not been incarnated since “the Phantom” rose from the grave. Jesus of Nazareth received the Christ essence at his baptism and became the supreme example of human development, to be emulated by us.

Actually, there are two Jesuses, even in Scripture. This is clear from the fact that there are two genealogies. The Jesus of the Matthew genealogy was a reincarnation of Zoroaster and therefore not unique. The Jesus of Luke’s genealogy is the unique one, for although his way was prepared by Buddha, he himself was a single incarnation. Our judgment must be that if Christ is merely the supreme example of human development, unique only as to this single incarnation, then he is not the divine Savior revealed in Scripture. And he is expendable.

Scientology is another of the American homegrown religions, founded and directed by L. Ron Hubbard, who is now in his seventies. It combines amateur psychotherapy and eastern religion with science fiction. Hubbard was once a published science fiction writer. Scientology claims to be the culmination of all religion and “spiritual heir of Buddhism in the western world.”

It has not always been a religion, nor has it always been scientology. In 1950 Hubbard published *Dianetics*, in which he set forth “the modern science of mental health.” He propounded the view that a trained therapist could use an electro-galvanometer (E-meter) to uncover the sources of a person’s neuroses and irrational behavior. The E-meter is akin to the lie detector. The auditor asks questions and gives commands and the instrument records fluctuations in skin resistance. This helps to uncover engrams, or psychic scars. Revealing these scars or engrams makes it possible to prevent any recurrence of the neurotic attitudes of behavior.

About 1952, Hubbard combined his pseudoscience with pseudoreligion. It seems that some counselees were suffering from engrams incurred not only during prenatal or postnatal life. They were suffering from engrams suffered in a prior existence. Obviously, that implied reincarnation and Hubbard began to investigate spiritualism. Through the years he gained valuable insight and knowledge in spiritual matters. In other words he has done what some other secular humanists are doing: syncretizing their humanism with eastern occultism.

Now he teaches that ultimate reality was populated by eternal, uncreated, omnipotent, omniscient, personal beings called Thetans. The Thetans agreed to create the Material-Energy-Space-Time Universe. For some reason they decided to enter this universe by incarnation in various life forms. When these life forms died the Thetans reincarnated. They gradually lost their divine attributes because they were not using them. By the time evolution had ascended the scale to homo sapiens the incarnate Thetans had forgotten that they were gods.

Now, in every human being there is an imprisoned Thetan trying to get out. Unfortunately, the human being has forgotten that he has a god within; also, engrams from this and previous incarnations prevent the Thetan’s escape.

Scientology to the rescue. With the help of manuals, organizational discipline, trained scientologists (auditors), and electrogalvanometers the disciple begins his pilgrimage. He identifies his engrams from this life and prior lives, and is rid of them. He experiences soul trance. He gradually gains control over the Matter-Energy-Space-Time universe. He has been reawakening his innate deity and is on the way to regaining total Thetanhood and thus escaping the Matter-Energy-Space-Time universe completely. It will take much time, effort, and money for this to happen.

Scientology may or may not be the first of the new religions to combine technology and mysticism. But the notion that Hubbard has succeeded in doing that has caught the imagination of an estimated 3,000,000 followers worldwide.

Stripped of its technological gimmicks and jargon and its special religious vocabulary, Scientology is just one more expression of a fundamental precept of eastern occultism: the ultimate component of reality is not matter but consciousness. The way to power over the material realm is through control or alteration of consciousness. There is no Jesus Christ in scientology.

Valerie Harper, television's Rhoda, says that enrollees in EST will create "a critical mass of agreement about an idea, and then out of that things will manifest." John Denver meditates under a portable pyramid and serves on the advisory board of *Erhard Seminars Training*. He says that Werner Erhard is a god and knows it, that he is running the universe. Werner Erhard says: "How do I know I'm not the reincarnation of Jesus Christ? You wouldn't believe the feelings I have inside me." Yoko Ono, Carly Simon, Cher, Judy Collins, Diana Ross, Joanne Woodward and Norman Lear have all taken the training.

The only absolute or universal in EST is experience: pure, non-circumstantial experience. The roots of EST seem to be in Zen Buddhism. The religious philosophy has been dispensed with and what is left is meditation to attain the experience. Erhard says: "What we think happens is that people go beyond emotion, attitude, and body sensation, to a thing we call experience. Experience for us has no form to it; it's pure substance without any form."

Erhard Seminars Training was founded in 1971. In at least 12 cities in the United States people attend two consecutive weekends of training, totaling 60 hours. The fee in 1976 was \$250. Through long sessions with very few breaks to answer calls of nature and very brief meal periods, the instructor badgers and bullies participants. He plays on their insecurities and tries to break down their self-image. The goal is "getting it." "It" is knowing that there is nothing to get. There is nothing to get because one already has it. Do you get it?

Erhard founded the Hunger Project in 1977. One million dollars was collected and the money was used to collect more money. As of 1979 no one was being fed by the Hunger Project because that would be a dehumanizing act. I don't know whether anyone other than Erhard Training Seminars has benefited from the Hunger Project since 1979. It is also hard to say whether or not Valerie Harper's prediction that out of a critical mass of agreement things will manifest has been borne out. There is no Christ in any of this.

"You will be as gods. You will know. You will not die. God has not told you the whole truth." The devil once used a serpent. Today he uses cults to tell the same lies with the same murderous intent and lethal results. In our next meeting we will meet some of the same people we have met in passing during these lectures. We will also meet a few others, whose Jesus is really only a Christ among equals.

IV. THE CULTS: THE CHRIST AMONG EQUALS

"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me (Jn 14:6)." These words of Jesus, along with all of Scripture that testifies of him, speak of his uniqueness. He is without peer. There is no other way or truth or life, no other access to the Father.

It is characteristic of some cults to ignore these words for the simple reason that they have no room at all for Jesus Christ in their doctrinal system or worship. But there are others that use his name and speak with some reverence of him. These do not completely ignore him. They rather demote him to the rank of one great teacher among many or one son of God along with others. At best, Jesus is a way, a truth, a life among others. He is a Christ among equals.

We have seen, for example, that *Jehovah's Witnesses* regard him as a creature among creatures, an angel among angels, a brother of Satan, a god among a plurality of gods. Thus their *New World Translation*, 1961, corrupts and perverts the clear meaning of Scripture. In John 1:1, for example, the absence of the article with *theos* is used to justify the translation: "The Word was a god." (We shall discuss this in a bit more depth in the final lecture.) In Colossians 1:15-17 the editors explain that words in brackets are used "to complete or clarify the sense in the English, text." Apart from the deliberate falsification we also note the irony of using Paul's words to the Colossians to support a gnostic view of Christ. "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; because by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist." Arius would have been impressed!

The *Mormons* also regard Jesus-as a god among many as well as a brother to the devil and to demons. *Christian Science* does not regard him as God or a god, but as a son of God among many sons of God.

The Jesus of *eastern religion* is not the Way, Truth and Life, either. Rather, men came to the Father by him when they attain to God-consciousness as he did. Between the ages of 12 and 30 he traveled to India and Egypt. In India he became a Hindu yogi, mastered Vedic and Buddhist teaching and attained God-consciousness. In Egypt, at Heliopolis, he studied in the mystery schools of Thrice-greatest Hermes. Then he returned to Israel to teach his disciples how to attain to God-consciousness. He is one of several teachers who could teach people how to do this. He is among equals as a teacher and as one who has attained to Godconsciousness.

In keeping with this eastern view, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi reduced Jesus in his inaccurate and misapplied quotation of Psalm 46:10. "Christ said, 'Be still and know that I am God.' Be still and know that you are God and when you know that you are God you will begin to live Godhood, and living Godhood there is no reason to suffer." So much for the non-religious nature of *Transcendental Meditation*.

Christ is certainly decreased when David "Mo" Berg tries to increase himself by saying: "You could even rebuke the devil in the name of David and he will flee. No power in the world can stand against the spirit in David." Implicit in such a statement, it seems to me, is the boast that the power and authority of Berg's name is equivalent to that of Jesus.

For the Colorado-based *Summit International*, Jesus is neither an angel nor a son of God. He is a deified human being among others. Mark L. Prophet (his real name) organized Summit Lighthouse in 1958. Mr. Prophet was the spirit-writing amanuensis of Master El Morya Khan of India. It was El Morya who taught the medium the psychic discipline of "I Am That I Am" Consciousness. "I Am That I Am" Consciousness is self-identification with God. The Prophet and his wife, Elizabeth Clare Wolf, proclaimed themselves the divinely appointed messengers of the Great White Brotherhood.

The instruction for attaining the exalted state of "I Am That I Am" Consciousness comes through mediums. It comes from a number of ascended masters, including Buddha, St. Germain, Master El Morya Khan of India and ... Jesus. Initiation and progress in the group is called "Mastery." It is entering a spiritual gateway that leads onto the path to a total merging with God. Then the devotee becomes a living expression of the god-self or of his I Am presence. The group condemns abortion on the basis that it robs the fetus of any chance of attaining Mastery or I Am Consciousness.

Mark prophet died of a stroke in 1973 and became an Ascended Master, along with Jesus and the others. His spirit name is "Lanello." He speaks through his, widow. Their son is an incarnation of one of nine Buddhas who will usher in the "golden age."

The group's principle publication is *Climb the Highest Mountain*. It contains 700 Bible passages that are interpreted to conform to the monistic philosophy and occult mysticism of the group. There is a weekly publication, "Pearls of Wisdom," and the group owns and operates Ascended Master University in Santa Barbara, California. The cult has changed its name and is now known as the *Church Universal and Triumphant*. It regards Christ as one deified being among others. His work is something that anyone who has achieved "Mastery" could do.

It is not even common sense to tell a pudgy preadolescent that he is in the direct line of Perfect Masters or that he is, in fact, Lord of the universe. That's what Maharaj Ji was told when his father died and his mother decided that the boy had a message that should and would be heard in America. The boy grew up and became a man with a liking for fast cars and fast living. There was a failing out with his disappointed mother when he took a wife. All has been mended, however, and the *Divine Light Mission* continues.

In the interest of good public relations Maharaj Ji's followers have stopped calling him Lord of the Universe, at least in public. There seems to be more business than religion, more technique than theology in the Divine Light Mission today. To an uninitiated observer the cult seems to be purveying Transcendental Meditation with a bit more religion, or Zen Buddhism with a God.

"The mind and the thoughts are obstacles to the experience of God." Pupils in his ashram are instructed to cup their hands over their ears while they meditate in order to get in touch with the source of all life. Some of us remember that our grandmothers' conch shells worked better than cupped hands.

Perhaps to appease the western scientific mind the “third eye” or satori has been identified as the pineal gland. For those who cannot achieve satori through meditation alone, this technique will help: press hard on your closed eyes and see the light.

There are three levels of consciousness in each of us by nature. There is the base level of ignorance and passion. There is the level of goodness. There is the level of transcendence. It is possible to reach this third level if you trust the Perfect Master, the Lord of the Universe, enough to practice meditation in the ways which he prescribes. The King of kings and Lord of lords, our Savior, may not even be Maharaj Ji’s equal. He is certainly not his superior.

We have spent some time identifying the Gnosticism of Sun Myung Moon’s *Unification Church*. We left him as he was teaching that a Third Adam must come, the Lord of the Second Advent, the Messiah of the Completed Testament who will succeed where Jesus failed. *Divine Principle*, pp189ff, says: “in the Completed Testament Age people will be justified not by observing the Mosaic Law or believing in Jesus, but by following and attending to the Lord of the new world.” Moon seems to be a bit cautious about positive identification of the one that is to accomplish mankind’s physical salvation.

He has, however, dropped quite a few hints. Listen to the direct quotation from a booklet biography of Moon: “Few were aware of the universal significance of the quiet Bethlehem scene 2,000 years ago when Jesus Christ, son of God, was born. The saying ‘history is made at night’ was again proven in 1920. On January 6 of that year an event of similar significance took place in the province of Pyung-buk, North Korea. On this day, unnoticed by all, a child was born who was destined to be appointed the most difficult task in history—remaking the world. History will remember the day as the beginning of a cosmic transition.” We are relieved that he was not born on December 25 until we realize that January 6 is the eastern Feast of the Nativity.

As with most controversial figures, the details of moon’s early career are not entirely clear. Opponents tend to describe the man as licentious; loyalists tend to idealize and romanticize. Certain facts are agreed upon by both factions. His childhood religious training was in Korea’s dominant Christian denomination, the Presbyterian Church. From there he moved to Pentecostalism. He began preaching in 1946. He was a prisoner of the communists in North Korea and was released by UN forces in 1950. He then organized his cult, which is much stronger in Korea than it is in this country. The Seoul police arrested him in 1955. The witnesses do not agree on what the charges were.

His teachings were published as *Divine Principle* in 1957 and introduced to American students two years later. He came to this country in 1971 and “One World Crusade” rallies were held in seven US cities during the following year. His public relations program involved being seen with high-ranking political figures, cultivating their good will, claiming their endorsement, and stressing his anti-Communist and pro-American views. Many people who are indifferent to his religious pretensions are afraid of his political aims and clout.

They believe that his plan of world unification and peace boils down to a plan for the conquest of North Korea with the help of the United States. In order to involve the US directly in the plan it is important for Moonies to hold positions of power and influence in government and finance.

Even the marriage policies of the cult are to serve this purpose. The only valid marriages are arranged and/or approved by Moon himself. The ceremonies become media events because they are mass weddings, sometimes involving literally thousands of couples. Frequently they are marriages between US citizens and Koreans. The stated reason for this is to promote world unity. Critics say it is to gain permanent residence visas and eventual citizenship for Korean nationals.

But who is the Third Adam, the Lord of the Second Advent? As we have noted, Moon has been cautious about coming out and bluntly saying: “I am.” The Third Adam is, however, to come from Korea. We can learn this from Revelation 7:2, where we read: “Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God.” The east obviously means either Japan, or China, or Korea. But Japan actively persecuted Christians in this century, and especially in Korea. China is communistic. That leaves Korea.

Then, as the second Adam came 2,000 years after Abraham, so the Third Adam must come 2,000 years after Jesus. He is to marry the perfect wife and beget sinless children and establish God's Kingdom on earth. Now all of Moon's followers know that his marriage to his present wife (there were earlier marriages) is the marriage of the Lamb "prophesied" in Revelation 19. They also know that Moon's 12th child was born in the spring of 1980 and that there is now a perfect child for each of the tribes of Israel. They also see that he is beginning to distribute and delegate his authority. From this some conclude that physical salvation has been won by him and God's kingdom on earth has been established. They are not unduly disturbed by the prospect of Moon's death: although he is perfect he is still mortal and will some day pass to the Heavenly Kingdom.

The guess of Moons' followers as to who the Third Adam might be is evident in some of their literature. Not with total consistency, but usually pronouns referring to Moon are capitalized in the same context in which pronouns referring to Jesus are left in lower case. And cult members are exhorted that "Prayer should be directed to Heavenly Father through True Parents." The true parents are, of course, the Reverend and Mrs. Moon.

If only Christians of today did not act so much like the priests and rabbis of Jesus' day—resisting and persecuting. In the collected pronouncements known as "Master Speaks" Moon is quoted: "During my first three years of public ministry, just as Jesus did, I had to go through several hardships culminating in the torture of prison life, which was more for me than Jesus' cross." Again: "I had to accomplish all left unaccomplished by my predecessor ... When you think of that, you must feel indebted to me and you cannot lift your face before me."

All who believe these things do feel indebted to him and strive to pay the debt, to "fulfill the Law of Indemnity." They do it by fasting, by fundraising, by recruiting, and with unquestioning obedience. They really regard Moon, as Moon wants the Lord of the Second Advent to be regarded: as Christ's equal and even his superior.

Historian Arnold Toynbee once ventured the opinion that *The Baha'i Faith* might become the religion to unite the world. It hasn't and it won't, but it has wooed and won some loosely moored Christians. There are none *in* our congregations because Baha'i members are required to withdraw from other religious affiliations. There are probably some *from* our congregations, especially in university communities.

On May 23, 1844 a Shiite Moslem in Persia, Mulla Husayn by name, set out to find the Bab. The Shiites had been waiting for the Bab (the "Gate of God") since 941. Mulla Husayn knew what kind of person Bab must be: "Between twenty and thirty years old, medium height, doesn't smoke, without physical defects, but has great knowledge and is descended from Fatima."

He met a young man in a green turban, told him of his quest and described the object of his quest. The young man in the green turban said: "That describes me," or words to that effect. And it did. His name was Mirza Mohammed Ali-ibn-Radhik, and he was the Bab—the Gate of God.

The Bab ranked with Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed. He was also the herald of a greater one to come. He gained many followers who were much persecuted by the Moslem majority. More than 10,000 were put to death and the Bab himself was executed in 1850.

One of the Bab's imprisoned followers was a wealthy nobleman from Teheran, Mirza Husayn Ali. An angel appeared to him in prison and told him that he was to be Baha'u'llah, The Glory and Splendor of God. He was released from prison and exiled to Baghdad, where he wrote *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Most Holy Book.)

In 1862, as he was about to be exiled to Constantinople, he identified himself as Baha'u'llah. His own brother resisted him and the Turks found it necessary to separate the brothers in exile. The Baha'u'llah was sent to Acco in Palestine where he enjoyed relative freedom. For the rest of his life, he roamed about Acco, Haifa across the harbor, and the regions of mount Carmel. He died in 1892 and is buried at Haifa, where the international headquarters of The Baha'i Faith is located today.

The Baha'u'llah's writing was essentially moral teaching intended to improve life and build character. But the central and distinctive message was the unity of all religions. The Baha'u'llah taught that although religions differ externally, internally the great faiths are really one. Since the externals of religion divide rather

than unite, leave behind your present religion and join The Baha'i Faith which recognizes that all people are one, science and religion are one, all religions are one.

The world's great religions—Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Shinto—had been successive updatings of God's revelation. Baha'i provides the divine guidance for this age.

As the religion which encompasses and supersedes all religions Baha'i can and does draw on the Bible when that suits its purpose. The favorite passage is John 16:12-13. The scene is the Upper Room and Jesus says: "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." Baha'u'llah is, of course, the Spirit of Truth.

He is also, according to Baha'i writings, the reincarnate Christ, Everlasting Father, Alpha and Omega, and fulfillment of all the prophecies of all religions. He is not actually God himself, but he is the only source of divine guidance for this age.

But then, Jesus was not God Incarnate, either. He was a Manifestation of God, just as Baha'u'llah was. He did not rise from the dead; his cause did. It seems that Jesus gets less attention from the Baha'i Faith in other parts of the world than he does in Europe and the United States. That is to say, his name is not used to proselyte in places where it is hated or not known.

One of Baha'u'llah's sons was killed when he fell through a skylight and onto a wooden crate. The father decided that he had offered this son "as a 'ransom' for the regeneration of the world and the unification of its peoples."

When the father died in 1892 another son took over. He assumed the title Abdul Baha (servant of Baha). He became the official interpreter of the father's work and set out to spread it worldwide.

In 1912, Mrs. Phoebe Hearst induced Abdul Baha to come to this country. He conducted a lecture tour of eight months duration with stops in Kenosha, Wisconsin and Palo Alto, California. He laid the foundation stone of the Baha'i Temple in Wilmette, Illinois, which was finally completed in 1953. The building has nine sides and nine entrances, representing the nine major world religions. A convert or devotee who visits the temple enters through the door of his previous religion and thus, symbolically, enters the universal brotherhood of Baha'i. There are other centers in Uganda, Sydney, and Frankfurt.

The international headquarters in Haifa is housed in an impressive building (though not nearly so impressive as Wilmette's architectural wonder.) The organization is in the hands of a representative body called the Universal House of Justice. These nine men are also referred to as the Hand of the Cause.

What is "The Cause?" It is peace, unity, and a world state—a single global authority. The aim of world rule is not incidental or tangential. It is inseparable from "the Cause." It has been prophesied that it will occur in this century.

As far as the individual's devotion and life are concerned, there is really no need for salvation because there is really no evil to be saved from. Man's purpose is simply to know God and adore him. This purpose is achieved by knowing and loving the manifestation of God, Baha'u'llah. Divorce is easy; gambling, narcotics, drinking and lodge memberships are forbidden; there is to be no involvement in the political process, only strict subservience to the government. Members obligate themselves to draw up a will in which they take care to "provide for the Faith." Content, circumstance, posture, and time of prayer are carefully prescribed. Daily ablutions are also prescribed.

Baha'i boasts that it is really for all nations and races, working among blacks, American Indians and Latinos. However, like Unity, Christian science, Theosophy and certain other cults which have their roots in eastern religions, Baha'i is essentially a religion of the upper middle class and the affluent. Seals and Crofts sing The Baha'i Faith.

Christ has his equals among Moses, Buddha and Mohammed in this religion. He has really been supplanted and surpassed by Baha'u'llah, the prophet for this age.

Finally, a cult of which I had no knowledge whatsoever until last winter. *ECKANKAR* is a Sanskrit word meaning “co-worker with God.” It is eastern and gnostic and except for the new vocabulary the scheme of it will be familiar to you.

What is somewhat novel is the blatant way in which its leader assumes the messianic role in language that paraphrases some of the Bible’s most important statements concerning Jesus Christ. The Christ of *ECKANKAR* is expendable in that he is in no way necessary to this religion. He is among equals in the sense that what the Bible says about him *ECKANKAR* says about its Living Master.

“The Living *ECKANKAR* Master is the *SUGMAD* (Godhead) manifested upon earth and designated to gather up all souls that are ready.” “The Living *ECKANKAR* Master is above time and space. He is God’s essential expression and is never separated from the source of true wisdom and reality.” Why is it important for people to study *ECKANKAR*? “Only then will they know and practice that God so loved them that IT sent a Living Master to bring souls home to IT.”

The last quotation makes it clear that the God of *ECKANKAR* is impersonal. In fact God is really the life current, seen as light and heard as sound. It would be, it is, a mistake to think of a remote and transcendent deity, a “God out there.” The secret place of the most high is really somewhere within oneself.

“All Life is Light and Sound, flowing out of the Godhead (*SUGMAD*), that secret place of the most high, somewhere within oneself. *ECKANKAR* is a teaching which gives knowledge of both Light and Sound, providing proof of the ultimate survival of man.” As *Dialogues with the Master* says: “Man is afraid to forget his mind, fearing to fall into the void with nothing to cling onto ... But man does not know that the void is not an empty space, but the very realm of God alone.” “When the chela (disciple) is no longer encumbered with the mind, he is free, happier, and finds life in *SUGMAD*. Those who are ready are led to *SUGMAD* while still residing in their physical bodies.

What hinders us in attaining such liberation is karma. Karma is administered by Kal Nirranjan, the Evil Power. He is the God of the Bible given his proper name. That is to say, he is the demonic creator of this material world and of our physical bodies. He is the ruler of this lower world and responsible for evil.

Kal Nirranjan deceives even disciples of *ECKANKAR* by sending such pious illusions as the brotherhood of man. “It is an axiom of *ECKANKAR* that whosoever tries to serve humanity will be a failure.... It is one of Kal Nirranjan’s greatest traps to make one feel he is serving his fellow man. All those who heal the physical and mental aspects of man, who seek after peace for mankind, are deceived that this is God’s design and will.” There is nothing here of unity, brotherhood or hunger projects. Just honest selfishness.

The 971st Living Master (Makantu), and the first American to be so incarnated, was Paul Twitchell. He died in 1971 and was succeeded by Sri Darwin Gross who married Twitchells’ widow.

In these lectures I have tried to stay away from the discussion of *spiritualism and the occult*. The subject was covered very thoroughly and interestingly by Dr. Becker in a Pastors Institute some years ago. Those lectures have been published as *Wizards That Peep and Mutter*, Northwestern Publishing House. However, since virtually all the cults we have discussed involve themselves in occult spiritualism in some way, a brief review of the seven principles of spiritualism might be in order.

They are:

- 1) The Fatherhood of God (God is the impersonal Creator and Sustainer)
- 2) The Brotherhood of man
- 3) Continuous Existence
- 4) Communion of Spirits and ministry of Angels (Man is improved by contact with spirits. Jesus himself was a medium from the spirit world, a very good one. His unity with the Father was the unity of mediumship. In that sense he was mediator between God and man.)
- 5) Personal Responsibility (There is no atoning value in the death of Christ and the idea of vicarious satisfaction is a wicked delusion.)
- 6) Compensation and Retribution Hereafter for Good and Evil Done on Earth.
- 7) A Path of Endless Progression (we reap what we sow, but gradually improve.)

Mind reading, fortune-telling, and soul trance used to belong to the realm of mystics, oriental fakirs, and occidental fakers. It was part of the task of science to debunk superstitious practices. A remarkable phenomenon of our time has been the turn away from scientific materialism to psychic phenomena, parapsychology, extrasensory perception on the part of young men trained in and devoted to science. They have come to the conclusion (some of them) that there is more to reality than matter. They have turned (some of them) to the exploration of fields which their fathers and grandfathers dismissed as bunkum. To quote Dave Hunt, of the Spiritual Counterfeits Researchers: "Many of our younger scientists seem to be turning to the East, and parapsychology is giving them a big push in that direction." We know that police investigators are calling upon psychics to help them with increasing frequency and with occasional success.

All of this is given the blessing of some representatives of the scientific community when levitation is called psychokinesis, fortune telling is called precognition, and mind reading is called extrasensory perception.

It should be noted that each of these in some way and to some extent imitates certain of God's attributes: omnipotence omniscience, omnipresence. Dave Hunt acknowledges that some of these phenomena may well be authentic, and that mediumship and possession are still realities in our modern world. He offers four plausible explanations, all of them possible within the framework of biblical reality, and not necessarily excluding one another.

- 1) The psychic powers may be residual in man, weakened but not completely lost in the Fall. Here he notes that most efforts to use these powers are still within the framework of rebellion against God's rule.
- 2) The psychic powers may be developmental: man was created with the potential to do these things but their development was cut short by the Fall. (Mr. Hunt notes that man's need now is not development of these powers but repentance.)
- 3) The psychic powers are lapsogenic: they were not lost or hampered by the Fall but came into existence because of it, perhaps as Satan's "gift.")
- 4) The psychic powers are spiritistic. Here Dave Hunt refers us to Ephesians 6:12. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

We may expect that more cults or schools will develop from the interesting work of educated men and women who are getting grants and devoting careers to the study of parapsychology. We cannot categorize their Christ as gnostic or equal. More likely he is expendable. But we may be sure that some of these developments are disturbing some of our people.

In our final lecture we will try to share some suggestions regarding the prevention and cure of defection to the cults among our people, as well as some possible hints as to the evangelization of those who are in the cults.

V. THE CULTS: PREVENTION AND CURE

We have spent four lectures characterizing and describing cults—ancient and modern, eastern and American, pseudoscientific and pseudoreligious. We have analyzed them from the point of view of men who believe that Jesus Christ is the unique and eternal Son of God, our only but our-sure salvation. We know the genuine and so we are in the blessed position of being able to identify the counterfeit.

But what about our people who have not had the advantage of complete theological training and are not privileged to work day and night with God's Word as we are? What preventive measures can we employ to help them withstand the Evil One when he comes in the guise of religion? What cure is there to offer when they become infected by the error of the cults? What is there to offer those who are already existing in a living death?

The answer is obvious: we have the word; we have the Gospel. The Gospel is God's power for salvation, revealing God's righteousness by faith (Ro 1:16,17). The word of Christ is the message which creates faith (Rm 10:17). The Holy Scriptures are the trustworthy message for refuting those who oppose sound doctrine (Tt 1:9).

The means for prevention and cure are obvious: gospel, Word, truth. The method of applying these means may not always be so obvious. Methods will vary with circumstances and according to individual abilities. But the way in which bankers are trained to recognize counterfeit money may provide us with a clue as to how we ought to proceed. Certain bankers are sent to a two-week intensive training course during which they spend all of their time studying genuine currency. They become thoroughly familiar with every detail of an authentic bill. They are never shown any counterfeit. But at the end of the training period they are able to recognize bogus bills.

The analogy is plain although it is imperfect at a number of points. We would not suggest that the truth of God's Word can be taught without *ever* presenting examples of error. We know that Christian education is a lifelong process, not a short course. But the main point of the analogy, intensive and extensive exposure to and contact with what is authentic is valid. The best prevention and the best cure lie in instruction in the truth.

The best thing we can be doing is what we are doing: preaching the gospel, teaching all that Christ has commanded. As heirs of the Lutheran Reformation we are well equipped to do that. If we observe that liberal Protestants and charismatic fundamentalists contribute in disproportionate numbers to the cults that is not to rejoice in their folly or to boast of our superiority. It is to acknowledge the grace of God in vouchsafing to us the sound teaching of the Lutheran Confession.

The Confessions, in agreement with God's Word, teach us to proclaim a real and objective unity: the unity of the whole human race under God's judgment and under Christ's imputed righteousness. They remind us of the centrality of Christ in Scripture, in God's salvation economy, in history itself. They help us relate all Bible truth to the article on which the church stands or falls: the forgiveness of sins by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. By example, the Confessions teach us that all doctrine is in some way a corollary of justification by faith. They inculcate in us and help us inculcate in others an appreciation of the sacraments as the gospel in another form, as means of grace. They help us teach the significance of the sacraments for Christian living and not simply teach where others have erred in their understanding and practice of the sacraments.

We have learned from Luther and our fathers that souls are not nourished by subjective appeals to subjective experience, but by objective proclamation of God's truth. To paraphrase Augustine: In the church what counts is not "I feel, I think, I sense, I judge." in the church what counts is "Thus saith the Lord."

We do not present the gospel as a nobler scheme, a higher philosophy, a three-point program, four spiritual laws, a system of morality, the most logical explanation of life's big puzzles. We proclaim it as fact because it is true. We proclaim it as history: the record of what God in his grace and power has done, is doing, will do. On the basis of Scripture we declare the saving acts of God and teach the significance of that history for every human being.

That is the way the devil is conquered. That is also the very activity that must draw his fiercest opposition. The Adversary can concentrate his most devilish activity where the Gospel is preached because he doesn't have much to do where there is only unbelief.

And so, our preaching of the truth must always include identifying and defending against error. The care of souls includes preventive measures. What should we be doing, or doing better?

There are some answers implicit in the reasons cited for the appeal and success of various cults in our time. If a frequent factor in cult involvement on the part of the young is family breakdown, obviously we must keep on working to strengthen families. Where there is love, discipline, stability, teaching in the home, there will not be a vacuum that the cult can rush in and fill in analyzing the kind of youth who do not fall victim to the cults someone has described them as "young people who have two advantages: they are from committed, not nominally religious, families; and are members of strong, active congregations where teaching and worship are emphasized and reinforced by fellowship in a youth program."

Not only teens and unmarried young people but people of all ages need the support system which is the Communion of saints. A strength of the cults is the friendly way in which they offer human community. Doesn't it sting when some of our former members claim to find in cults what they missed in our fellowship? Isn't it upsetting when what should describe our Christian congregations is found more readily by some people

in the cults: support, compassion, zeal, commitment, love? Whether or not the judgment of lovelessness is fair and accurate, Christians are not perceived by outsiders today as they were perceived by Lucian of Samosata in the second century. He wrote concerning the Christians of his day: “Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brothers.”

We should be concerned not only with what we do but with how our actions are perceived. If it is true that many cult founders and leaders have been masters of public relations, it is probably also true that we are often inept even in relating to our own constituency.

One is reluctant to say, “There are things we can learn from those people,” and yet there are things those people do that remind us of things we should be doing. Their methods remind us that we should be challenging and equipping more lay people to play a larger role in congregational life. It musn’t stop with the official life of the congregation, or even with efforts in lay evangelism. We should always be seeking more effective methods for training our people simply to live as Christians in the world, to simply walk in keeping with their high calling.

The way in which many cults zealously indoctrinate their members reminds us (in a negative way) that we must provide sound Bible teaching which does not simply go beyond the catechism to more doctrine and more proof passages. We must provide sound Bible teaching by teaching Bible History and setting the Bible in history and regarding the great proof passages in their context. Especially where there has not been a Christian Day School and where we have many new Lutherans, biblical ignorance and naivete are endemic; people are left vulnerable to the tactics of anyone who can quote a few Bible passages. If we use isolated proof texts in our instruction and never help our members look at the *sedes doctrinae* in context, people can easily receive the impression that the cults’ handling of Scripture is no different from ours.

Pastor and people, without focusing all their interest and effort on what is morbid can share information on religious movements—new and old. They can alert one another to political organizations or other groups that are really religious in nature. Let the criteria in evaluating all these things be: “What do they think of Christ?” “What has He accomplished according to their teaching?” “Are Christ and his salvation at the heart of their concerns?” A helpful resource, in addition to the Spiritual Counterfeits Project and the “How to Respond...” Series which are mentioned in our bibliography is CARIS. That stands for Christian Apologetics: Research and Information Service - PO Box 1783 - Santa Ana, CA 92702.

If disciplined study, meditation, and instruction for living are part of the cults’ appeal, let us not forget that these are also part of the Church’s program. To constantly say “Study God’s Word and meditate on it, pray, live your faith;” and not to show people how to do these things in a practical way is to burden them with guilt and drive them to someone who will show them how and at the same time rob them of Christ.

There are plans for reading through the Bible in a year’s time and plans for brief daily Scripture portions. These can be listed in the monthly newsletter or the weekly bulletin. There are methods for devotional reading of brief portions or single verses that the pastor can demonstrate in Bible Classes and instruction courses. Ask the reporter’s questions of the passage: “Who? What? When? Why? With what result?” Identify and distinguish law and gospel and apply each to your own life situation. Decide what in a given passage is there to strengthen faith, what renews hope, what elicits the response of love. Note what is familiar and comforting, what is familiar but seen in a new light, what to ask the pastor about when Opportunity arises. Encourage people to do this for a few minutes daily, apart from and in addition to family devotions. Suggest that after rolling the passage around for a time one may ask: “Lord, what do you want me to do?” And pray: “Lord, give me strength and guidance to do it” meditation is a learn-by-doing discipline. It is one thing the pastor cannot do for the people. But he can help them get started.

The objective Word focuses their attention on Christ and his salvation, on God’s grace and, providence, instead of on self or riddles or mantras. It is the medium of the Holy Spirit for building us up in Christ rather than building our selfish egos or uncovering our divine potential or awakening our I AM Consciousness.

When we study God’s word with our people in Bible Class or when they ask about some point in the sermon, let us be open to their questions and deal honestly with their doubts. If our preaching gives the

impression that it is concerned only with the past and the future (Bible History and heaven), perhaps our applications need to be more practical, pointed and explicit without lapsing into Calvinistic prescription as to what the Christian must do and how it must be done in every life situation, let us be sure we are translating the “there, then, and them” of Scripture to the “here, now, and us” of Christian living.

While we concentrate on providing what is authentic and nourishing we must also provide some information on what is bogus. A long series of classes on the cults, it seems to me, is not the way to go. But the aberrations and tactics of the cults can be touched upon in connection with Bible study.

It can be helpful to look at some of the texts which cultists use to see them in context, and to warn against the false interpretation. One example of such misuse is the way in which Mormons use a series of passages to prove the preexistence of souls before conception and in eternity. They begin with Jeremiah 1:5 to require what would be a possible interpretation if Scripture taught the preexistence of souls elsewhere:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart;
I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

They support this interpretation with Acts 17:26-29 which speaks of God’s providence in the affairs of his offspring; Heb 12:9 where God is called the Father of our spirits; John 1:2 and 14 which speak of the preexistence of the Logos; and Revelation 12:79 where they assume that the war in heaven took place before creation.

Another example is the Mormon twisting of Isaiah 29:4 and Ezekiel 37:15-23 to make them read as prophecies of the *Book of Mormon* and its discovery. In this connection you might warn against religionists who use such expressions as “certainly,” “obviously,” “undoubtedly,” all reasonable people agree that to keep you from thinking about what they’re asserting. Mormons do this with reference to the stick of Judah and the stick of Joseph in Ezekiel 37. They say: “*Plainly* the separate records of Judah and Joseph are here referred to.”

You may have opportunity, without undertaking an extended study of Christian Science to point out some of the fatuities of science and Health with Key 1~2 ~t For example: “Divide the name Adam into two syllables and it reads a dam, or obstruction. This suggests the thought of something fluid, of mortal mind in solution. It further suggests the thought of that ‘darkness ... upon the face of the deep,’ when matter or dust was deemed the agent of Deity in creating man, -- when matter, as that which is accursed, stood opposed to Spirit. Here a dam is not a mere play on words’ it stands for obstruction, error, even the supposed separation of man from God, and the obstacle which the serpent of sin, would impose between man and his Creator.” There is a reminder here to be careful in our own handling of Scripture, lest our wordplays on the English text give the impression that this is a legitimate way to use Holy Writ. Even in jest, it may not be wise to use the “abomination of desolation” passages as references to nuclear destruction.

The fraudulent use of Scripture by Mrs. Eddy might also be unconstructive in a negative way. It is a characteristic of some cults that they use Jesus’ name and Holy Scripture to acquire a certain “virtue by association.” For example: “When a new spiritual idea is born to earth, the prophetic Scripture of Isaiah is renewedly fulfilled: ‘Unto us a child is born ... and his name shall be called wonderful (Is 9:6).’ Or: “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me (in 7:16).”

Exposure to the Christian Science paraphrase of the Lord’s Prayer might suffice to immunize our people against future infection:

“Our Father-Mother God, all-harmonious,
Adorable One.
Thy kingdom is come; Thou are ever-present.
Enable us to know, -- as in heaven, so on earth, -- God is omnipotent, supreme.
Give us grace for today; feed the famished affections;
And Love is reflected in love.
And God leadeth us not into temptation, but delivereth us from sin, disease, and death.
For God is infinite, All-power, all Life,

Love over all, and All.”

Some penetrating questions that have been asked to deflate the Transcendental Meditation people might be worth passing on to concerned lay people. “If TM is really the science of creative intelligence, why do its advocates sound so trite and repetitious? if the mantra is a meaningless word, why so much secrecy about it? If TM is powerful to deal with human ills why price it beyond the reach of those who need it most? If it really leads to health and prosperity, why not concentrate on India?”

Similar searching questions regarding The Baha’i Faith might be asked. How does 20th century man differ *morally* from human beings that lived in the centuries of Mohammed or Jesus or Buddha or Moses? *What* teaching of Baha’i satisfies the needs of 20th century man in a way that no other religion can? It may also be useful to go through chapters 14 and 16 of John’s Gospel and point out how ridiculous it is to identify the Spirit of Truth with Baha’u’llah.

Rather than discuss various peculiarities of Jehovah’s witnesses (all of which they can rationalize and justify to the satisfaction of *some* people), Bible Class time could be spent on the passages which deal with the eternal god-hood of Jesus Christ and which Jehovah’s Witnesses prefer to ignore or to misinterpret.

The pastor who confirmed me killed two birds with one stone in connection with the variant reading in I John 5:7b-8a. He alerted us to the fact that the Jehovah’s witnesses were calling attention to the interpolation as though the doctrine of the Trinity stands and falls with it. At the same time our pastor introduced the subject of variant readings in an inoffensive, unobtrusive and very helpful way. Blessed be his memory. Jehovah’s witnesses have more recently gotten some mileage from the variant at I Timothy 3:16.

They also misinterpret John 10:30, “1 and the Father are one.” They speak of a unity of “agreement, purpose and organization,” while denying the unity of essence. One might ask: “Why did the Jews pick up stones when he said *that*?”

Since the publication of the *New World Translation* in 1961 (perhaps before then) they have made much of the absence of the article in John 1:1. They say, “The Greek does not say the word was *the* God, but *a* god.” They are quite willing to accept that this would imply polytheism, since Paul said: “There be gods many.” They are not ready to learn about the position of predicate nominatives-relative to the copula or about the use and non-use of the article in *Koine*. They (or at least the people in your Bible Class) might be helped by applying *their* principle of translation to a few other verses in the Prologue of John to see how it works out when consistently applied: verses 6, 12, 13, and twice in verse 18.

You might also alert the Christians in your care to beware of anyone or any system that refers to the Deity as the divine principle, to God as “It” or to the Holy Spirit as “She.” The antennae of any Christian ought to start vibrating when the language of the KJV is imitated or incorporated into anyone’s new revelation, as was done so profusely in the standard works of Mormonism. *A new revelation* in Elizabethan English?

Is it good pastoral theology to apply the counsel of 2 John 10 to situations in which cultists appear on the porches of Christian people? “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.” John, of course, was speaking of extending hospitality to a false prophet and thus supporting his nefarious work. We ought not turn his words into a rigid rule that excludes living room conversation or kitchen table discussion. But not every Christian is equipped to engage in apologetic or to attempt evangelizing cultists. On the other hand, if we teach our people to say “No use,” is that tantamount to saying: “The Word of God *is* bound?”

There are many pitfalls in dealing with cultists or in discussing cults with congregation members. One is to regard the cult as a joke, no matter how ridiculous it is in fact. The devil has no sense of humor and what he is up to is not funny at all. When Christians have heard only that cultists are kooks and then meet a sane and friendly representative of an anti-Christian group, they are thrown off balance.

It is a mistake, too, to dismiss any cult as a passing fad, as much as we wish it were. An analysis of cult theology, Christology, soteriology shows that while faces and names and terms may change, the substance is as old as the temptation in Eden. Mormonism is a striking example of a cult that does not seem to be on the verge

of going the way of all fads. 150 years ago it was a joke and a fad. Today it is a force to be reckoned with in American society and on the world mission scene.

Another pitfall is not knowing with whom we have to do. People who introduce themselves as Bible students may simply be from Navigators, Campus Crusade or Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. These are dangerous enough with their decision theology. But people who call themselves Bible students may be something very unbiblical and unchristian. Watchtower Bible and Tract Society sounds wholesome. Unification Church sounds a bit too ecumenical but the name does not hint at anything as sinister as Moon's cult. Moon's group is not typical in the number of front organizations that it sponsors. But a list of the groups that he uses to attract the unwary and to invest his millions may be helpful.

The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity - The Unification Church - American Youth for a Just Peace - Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles - Committee for Responsible Dialogue - Council for unified Research and Education -Creative Community project - D.C. Striders (track, club) - Educational Redevelopment - Fong Industry Company - Fong Wha Titanium Company - Freedom Leadership Foundation - International Cultural Foundation -International Federation for Victory over Communism -International Pioneer Academy - International Re-Education Foundation - Judaism: In Service to the World - Korean Folk Ballet - New Education Development Systems - One World Crusade - Professors Academy for World Peace - Project Unity - Shin Stoneworks Company - Tae Han Kutile Company The Little Angels of Korea What Pharmaceutical Company - World Freedom Institute

It is a mistake in dealing with cultists to assume that because they have Bibles and quote them we share a common view of its authority. The attitude of most cults which pay lip service to the Bible is summed up in *Divine Principle*: "Scripture can be, likened to a lamp which illuminates the truth. its mission is to show the light of truth. when a brighter light appears the mission of the old one fades."

It is a mistake to assume that cultists will employ valid logic or exercise fair play. C.S. Lewis in *Beyond Personality, The Christian idea of God*, wrote: "We can't compete in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions. How could we? We're dealing with Fact. Of course anyone can be simple if he has no facts to bother about."

It is also a mistake to assume that therefore we can abandon logic or be anything but fair. We may lose most arguments. By conducting them in honesty and kindness. We will always lose people if we are so interested in point making that we abandon common courtesy and honesty.

If we insist on definitions of terms (and apologetic dialogue is really impossible without definition of terms), then we must also be prepared to spend a lot of time and exercise a lot of patience. To be frank and confident, to be bold in confession, without being harsh or arrogant or belittling comes from the Holy Spirit. To rely on our own cleverness will surely leave us poorly equipped. To speak the truth in love, relying on the Word's power and the Spirit's aid, may not result in immediate or evident success. But it will at least leave the way open for another time, another effort, and another person.

It is a mistake in arming our people or in confrontation with cultists to major in minors, to focus on peripheral matters. The refusal to accept blood transfusions, the sex history of Reverend Moon, the polygamy of 19th century Mormons, the navelgazing, of meditators are not of the essence. The way of salvation is.

A pitfall that is difficult to avoid is the assumption that you and the cultists share the same worldview. A person who is not a monotheist and does not think in terms of accountability to a just God and denies the reality of sin or even of matter itself is a very difficult person to relate to. It is not easy to find common ground with a person who operates in the exotic realm of pantheism or monism, or who believes that *he* is a god. Such a person is not open to Scriptural conviction unless the folly of his beliefs and the emptiness of his pretensions are demonstrated.

I do not pretend to know how to do that, but I can remind you of one great difference between yourself and any cultist. 'YOU know that you now possess salvation and eternal security in Jesus Christ. Every other religious system, including every cult, is still calling on the individual to be something, do something, pay for

something, and practice something that *might* finally result in salvation or satisfaction or security, *if... if*. Exposing that insecurity and uncertainty may be the necessary law function, which the Spirit of God will use to slay a person preparatory to making him or her alive through the Gospel.

It may, on the other hand, only make that person stubborn. And then it is important that we do not become hostile, slam doors, write people off. Dealing with cultists can be a demoralizing, discouraging, disheartening exercise in seeming futility. But when we have made an honest effort, let us stand still and see what God can do. Perhaps we will never see it but if souls are lost let it not be because I blew my cool.

What about deprogramming? The word raises the specter of legal and psychological issues as well as religious. It evokes images of cult members who are removed from a cult community, held against their will in some isolated place, subjected to a kind of counter-brainwashing, and returned to their families where they are expected to resume or assume a conventional role in society as people with conventionally religious or irreligious views. This deprogramming is usually associated with the more radical cults, where radical solutions seem to be called for.

Where deprogramming begins with removing a person from a commune against his or her will or snatching a person off the street deprogrammers are involved in kidnapping. They are subject to criminal prosecution and/or civil suit.

In the case of minors, and in some other situations, it is possible to remove a person from the control of the cults by court order. In the case of adults, this is more difficult unless the court is convinced that the person is being held involuntarily. Usually cult members would not be cult members if they believed that they were being held involuntarily, and so they will insist that they want to be where they are.

Sometimes parents or other family members will bargain with the cultist: "Come with us for a day, a week, a month to think this through and talk this out. Then return to the farm, the commune, the group, if you want to."

At some point the help of a professional deprogrammer may be procured. It is expensive, it may be illegal on some point, it will probably involve some methods that are not much different from those of the cult masters. Psychologically, it will involve breaking the individual down. The methods vary, but keeping the subject in one place and keeping after him is essential. It is really the reverse of brainwashing. It doesn't always work. However Stoner and Parke say: "We have not learned of a single case where the parents of a cult member, by themselves, were able to talk a son or daughter out of a religious cult."

Most families do not resort to deprogramming. Some wait and work. That is, they correspond with the cult member as long as that is possible. They do research in an attempt to understand and to find antidotes. They find other stricken families and join with them for mutual support. They suggest to the fire marshal or the health department or the board of education or the narcotics people that the place ought to be checked out.

Some wait and pray. Some give conditional approval, relieved that at least the youngster is not on drugs or in prison. Some approve without reservation. Some never did know or care where their kids were or what they did and they don't know or care now.

Of course, sadly, not everyone who leaves a cult—radical or respectable—is ready to return to the fellowship of the Christian congregation. Consciences have been seared. Whatever caused them to drift or lapse in the first place has probably not been rectified by either the cult experience or the deprogramming.

With gentleness and respect they need to be reevangelized and reinstructed. Perhaps the evangelization of cult members and former cult members is not so different from that of any unbeliever. We establish and maintain friendly personal relationships, as much as that is possible, waiting for opportunities and working for new opportunities. We remember that these are redeemed souls to be loved, not to be manipulated (manipulation is what cults do.) They are not adversaries to be bested. The devil is the adversary. They are not numbers to be computed, as tempting as the numbers game may be. They are not cases to be recounted—so many scalps for us to display.

We remember that basic insecurity which must be there: they do not *know* that they *now* possess salvation. And we have the means at our disposal to offer that security to them, God's power to create that

certainty: the gospel. We point them to Christ. We are confident of the gospel's power to do what no human being can do.

We are never satisfied with our efforts, complacent about our failures. But we do not torture ourselves or let parents torture themselves endlessly over what went wrong. We do not flay parents for their failures, rub their noses in their mistakes. There may be things that parents need to repent of and we may need to point that out. But then we direct them to the cross and encourage them to live by the word of forgiveness.

There must be more to say on this subject of prevention and cure. There must be more helpful ways to say it. I have no more to say, at least for now. Perhaps the brethren have things to share and we will have time for that.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of the dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:10-12).

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