

CHAPTER TWO

It Matters What You Believe

Why is there such a battle over creation and evolution? Does it really matter which you believe, or what you believe about religion at all? What's the difference if you are a Christian, a Hindu, a Jehovah's Witness, or whatever?

You've probably heard the cliché, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you're sincere." Or perhaps you've heard that all religions are just different roads to the same destination. Both are lies. It matters very much what you believe.

The only absolute certainty for every single human being is that he or she is going to die. This includes **you**. It may be sooner or it may be later, but you have an appointment with death. If you want to know what happens then, you are faced with a series of choices.

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- (1) Will you believe in a personal God or a series of impersonal forces? If you choose the latter, you cannot be sure what will happen to you after you die.
- (2) If you believe in a personal God, could He communicate accurately if He chose to? If not, you still cannot be certain.
- (3) If you believe in a God Who could communicate accurately, it makes sense to find out if there are any books that claim to be a revelation from Him. If there are none, you still cannot be sure about eternity.
- (4) If there is a way to find out if any of the world's so-called holy books are truly from God, those who want to be sure about eternity should make every effort to find out!

In this chapter we will do precisely that as we examine the truth claims of the best-known cults and major world religions and the writings they consider sacred. In Chapter 3, we will take a detailed look at the reliability of the Bible.

V. ALL RELIGIONS ARE NOT THE SAME.

There is a great deal of difference between Christianity and the rest of the major world religions, and between Biblical Christianity and the cults that falsely call themselves Christian.

Recommended resources: Sixteen-tape series on world religions and cults entitled "Confronting the Counterfeits," by Ron Carlson of Christian Ministries International, 7601 Superior Terrace, Eden Prairie, MN 55344. Much of the following was obtained from this series.

Many excellent books on cults are also available. These include Walter Martin's *Kingdom of the Cults*, Dave Hunt's *The Cult Explosion*, Larsen's *Book of Cults*, etc. Much of the information in this chapter on the Watchtower and the Mormon church was furnished by former members.

- Jehovah's Witnesses: see William J. Schnell, *Thirty Years a Watchtower Slave*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971. also, Bill & Joan Cetnar, *Questions for Jehovah's Witnesses*, R.D. #3, Kunkletown, PA 18058. The Cetnars are former Jehovah's Witnesses. This book includes photocopies of embarrassing Watchtower documents.
- Mormonism: see Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *The Changing World of Mormonism*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1980. Both the Tanners are former Mormons. Mrs. Tanner has an especially impressive background: she is a great-great-granddaughter of the noted Mormon "prophet" Brigham Young.

Some of the information on Islam is from John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *The Facts on Islam*, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon 97402, 1991; some is from personal communication with Arab friends who wish to remain anonymous for their own safety; most is from the Qur'an itself. The translation used is the fifth revised edition by N.J. Dawood, published by Penguin Books, London, 1990. Since Dawood is a Muslim himself, this is one of the few English versions Muslims will accept.

A. NECESSITY OF REVELATION IN ORDER TO KNOW GOD.

We saw in Chapter One that there has to be a God of some sort, whether a personal being or impersonal force. But how can we know anything about Him? The same way we can learn about anyone: by studying what he does. However, knowing *about* someone is different from knowing him personally. We can only truly know a human being if he tells us about himself. Likewise, we can learn some things about God by studying what He has done, but we can only know Him personally if He gives us a REVELATION about Himself.

1. “HOLY BOOKS” WHICH CLAIM INSPIRATION: *Bible, Qur’an, Book of Mormon.*

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If God is all-powerful, He could certainly give an accurate revelation of the things He wants us to know about Him. But has He? And if He has, where do we find this revelation?

Most of the major religions of the world have “holy books” which contain their key beliefs. Only three of these books specifically claim to be a revelation from God: the Bible, the Koran, and the book of Mormon. In addition, members of several religions have other sources of doctrine which they believe are given by inspiration of God.

- Mormons also believe two other books are divinely inspired: *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price*, written by Mormon leaders through the years.
- Jehovah’s Witnesses believe many of the documents published by their organization are divinely inspired.
- Christian Scientists believe the same about Mary Baker Eddy’s writings, although their concept of God is an impersonal force rather than a personal being. Since “inspiration” in the religious sense requires some intelligent being to do the inspiring, how can an impersonal force inspire anything?
- The Roman Catholic Church gives more weight to its “Sacred Tradition” than to the Bible.

We will examine these alleged sources of divine revelation later in this chapter.

2. *SOURCE OF OTHER “HOLY BOOKS.”*

All the rest of the “holy books” such as the Hindu and Buddhist writings do not even pretend to be a revelation from a personal God. They claim nothing more than to be the accumulated wisdom of the “ascended masters,” men such as Buddha and Confucius who are supposed to have attained a higher state of wisdom than the rest of mankind. But think about this: If man evolved from apelike ancestors, as these religions believe, where did the ascended masters get their wisdom?

Suppose two apes had developed the ability to communicate with each other about abstract concepts such as *What is the meaning of bananas?* While they might be proud of their intelligence, we humans would find their attempts at philosophy hilarious. They would not be intelligent enough to realize how stupid they were.

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Likewise, if humans evolved from apes, how do we know we’ve evolved enough for our questions to make sense? According to the religions built on the teaching of the “ascended masters,” these men – like all humans – are nothing more than highly evolved apes. Those who follow their doctrines are therefore basing their eternal destiny on nothing more than evolved ape wisdom. The followers of these religions have no way to be sure they are right. There is no way they can be sure about *anything*.

B. CONTRADICTORY “HOLY BOOKS” OF WORLD RELIGIONS CAN’T ALL BE TRUE.

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Each religion’s “holy book” presents a very different picture of who God is. The conflicting stories about God can’t all be true. It is possible that all of these books are wrong, but it is not possible that all of them are right. If any one of them is right, then all the others must be wrong.

C. BOOKS AND TRADITIONS CLAIMING TO BE DIVINELY INSPIRED.

It is logical to assume that an omnipotent God who made a deliberate choice to create the universe would have the ability to communicate, and to do so accurately. Any book that claims to be a direct revelation from Him, yet contains even one error of fact, cannot be trusted.

In the next chapter we will see that the Bible has never been proven to contain a single mistake. But first, how about other “holy books”?

1. **THE BOOK OF MORMON.**

The primary source for the following is Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s *The Changing World of Mormonism*. The Tanners are former Mormons who have devoted years to their research. They have tracked down surviving copies of many books Mormon leaders tried to destroy over the last hundred and sixty years. Their book includes photographs of these original Mormon writings. Other sources include the Book of Mormon and *Doctrine & Covenants*.

Perhaps you have seen neatly dressed young Mormon missionaries riding their bicycles around on their two-year mission to convert others to their religion. Those who watched the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah frequently saw the famous Mormon Temple and Tabernacle in the background. Mormonism is now the fastest-growing religion in the world, operating in 162 countries (*Los Angeles Times* story, reprinted in *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Jan. 14, 2002, p. E-16).

The Mormon religion is divided into two major groups: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Reformed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, based in Independence, Missouri. Since the former group is by far the larger of the two, we will consider it in some detail.

Mormons believe that the Bible is only a partial revelation from God and had to be supplemented by the Book of Mormon (subtitled *Another Testament of Jesus Christ*) in order for the fullness of the Gospel to be understood. However, the organization doesn’t stop there. Though Mormons seldom talk about it to outsiders, they also consider two other books to be scripture: *Pearl of Great Price* by Joseph Smith, and *Doctrine and Covenants*, a compilation of the writings of Mormon leaders from 1830 to the present. Most of the Mormon doctrines that differ radically from Biblical Christianity come from these two books, which actually contradict the Book of Mormon on many key points.

a. **What the Book of Mormon is About.**

The Book of Mormon claims to describe about a thousand years of the history of the North, Central, and South American Indians. Its crowning moment is a description of Jesus coming to America after His resurrection and preaching to them.

The story begins about 600 B.C. when an Israelite named Lehi received a revelation from God to build a ship and sail with his extended family to a new promised land. The group sailed from the Middle East across the Indian Ocean, around Australia, and across the Pacific for about 8,000 miles. They finally landed on a narrow strip of land (presumably around Panama) in the Americas, finding that the new land was completely uninhabited. From there they began to multiply and eventually populated all of the Americas.

All was not peace and harmony, though. Lehi had two sons, Nephi and Laman. Nephi loved and followed the God of his father, but Laman did not. As time went on their descendants found themselves in frequent battles. They became easy to distinguish, because God caused the Lamanites to become much darker than the fair-skinned Nephites. The conflict was interrupted by the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in the Americas, which led many on both sides to repentance and

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faith. However, after about 300 years the Lamanites reverted to their ungodly state and eventually wiped out all the godly Nephites. The dark-skinned victors became the ancestors of the Native Americans. The record of the events was preserved by Nephite men such as Moroni and Mormon, who became angels after their death.

Though Christians obviously do not accept the Book of Mormon as divinely inspired, we can use it as an evangelistic tool to reach Mormons. (See Appendix B.) The book contains so many passages taken verbatim from the King James Bible that one could get saved reading it.

b. *Some Major Non-Christian Mormon Doctrines.*

Note that the following doctrines came from either *Doctrine and Covenants* or *Pearl of Great Price*, not the Book of Mormon.

i. Origin of God.

Mormons believe that God the Father is a flesh-and-blood being like ourselves, who used to be a man. He lives on the planet nearest the star Kolob, which is the greatest of all stars (chapter 3 of the “Book of Abraham” in *Pearl of Great Price*). He has a father, grandfather, etc., of even higher spiritual rank than himself, but we have no way to know anything about them. He became the biological father of Jesus by sexual relations with Mary.

ii. Man’s Potential for Godhood.

Each man (not woman) has the potential to one day be a Father God himself. There is no limit to the number of men who may become gods. God is so far ahead that we will never catch up with him, but we have the potential to be known in our own spiritual kingdom as “God.” Mormon leader Alonzo Snow put it thus: “As man is, so God once was. As God is, so man may become.”

iii. Polygamy.

It is to each man’s advantage to set up his own spiritual kingdom with as many people in it as possible. (Sort of like spiritual multilevel marketing.) As a result, one of the doctrines of Mormonism is polygamy. Though conflicts with U. S. laws have forced Mormons to stop openly having multiple marriages, the church still teaches that plural marriage in the next life is necessary for a man to achieve maximum exaltation. Thus, Mormons are “sealed for time” to only one wife (although some still secretly practice polygamy), but may be “sealed for eternity” to as many as they want.

Women can have only one husband. Each man gets to decide which of his wives will be allowed to continue in his kingdom after death, and which ones will remain in the grave. The women have no say in the matter. This puts them under pressure to keep their husbands happy. The man will be a father god and, with whichever wives he chooses to keep, will continue to beget spiritual children throughout eternity.

iv. Baptism for the Dead.

One of the Mormon sacraments is baptism for the dead, in which a living member of the church is baptized in proxy for a dead person. The purpose of this practice is to save those who did not have the benefit of Joseph Smith’s revelations during their lifetime. The reason for the Mormon interest in genealogy is that whoever is baptized for a dead person gets to take him into his spiritual kingdom. The church hopes to learn the name of every human being who ever lived so that members can be baptized on behalf of those who died without the benefit of the Mormon religion. The more dead they are baptized for, the more highly exalted they will be when they become God in their own kingdom.

v. Shedding of Blood for Forgiveness.

Some sins can be forgiven only through the shedding of blood - not the blood

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of Jesus, but the sinner's own blood. Because of this, Utah is the only state that still performs execution by firing squad. This practice dates to the time when Mormons had complete control of the state. It was established because this is the only commonly accepted method of execution in which the individual's blood is shed. Though he is killed, the shedding of his blood allows him to be forgiven of his sins.

vi. *Secret Temple Rituals.*

Mormons practice secret temple rituals very similar to those of the Masons. These came from the founder of the religion, Joseph Smith, and other early Mormon leaders.

Smith and many of his followers were living in Nauvoo, Illinois, in the 1830s. Some of them who were Masons asked the worldwide Masonic organization for permission to start a lodge there. When it was granted, they promoted Smith from 1st to 33rd degree within a few days. The Masonic headquarters was outraged and rescinded their charter. Nevertheless, Smith and his followers liked the rituals and incorporated many of them into the Mormon religion.

Mormons have a number of other unusual practices such as the wearing of sacred underwear which is supposed to keep them from harm. These started because early Mormon leaders were very superstitious. Smith himself was heavily involved in occult activity.

vii. *Preexistence of Souls.*

God created the souls of all human beings before he allowed lesser Gods to create the world. These souls enter a body at birth but have no recollection of their previous existence (*Pearl of Great Price*, "Book of Abraham" chaps. 3 & 4).

viii. *Men may become angels and angels may become men.*

This is perhaps the only major doctrine that actually came from the Book of Mormon. Moroni, Mormon, and all the other writers identified in the book were men but became angels after they died. But where do our souls come from in the first place? The doctrine of preexistence says that we have existed since God created the universe. It's just that we don't remember that we were angels.

Revelation 12:4 tells us that the devil dragged one-third of the stars of heaven down with him in rebellion. Mormons agree with the traditional understanding that these are fallen angels. However, they believe that these beings were eventually placed into human bodies and became bad people, while many of the two-thirds that did not rebel against God have been placed into human bodies and became *good* people. (The doctrine is different from reincarnation in that Mormons believe it only happens one time rather than repeatedly.)

ix. *Inhabited Planets Throughout the Universe.*

There are countless inhabited planets throughout the universe, but our earth is the only one about which God has told us details (*Pearl of Great Price*, "Book of Moses" chap. 1).

These are only a few of the Mormon doctrines and practices. Despite the fact that most did not come from the Book of Mormon, Mormons claim that this book is the basis of their religion. Since it is the key to Mormon truth claims, let's focus our attention on where it came from.

c. ***Origin of the Book of Mormon: The Official Mormon Account.***

The credibility of the Book of Mormon and the Mormon religion depends upon the church's founder, Joseph Smith, Jr. Smith's successor Brigham Young said that any spirit that denies Joseph Smith is a prophet and the Book of Mormon is true, is of anti-Christ. A later Mormon President, Joseph Fielding Smith, said that "there is no

salvation without accepting Joseph Smith” (Tanner, p. 27). Besides claiming that he received the book from God, Smith also said that at various times in his life he personally met God the Father, Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah, and Elias, as well as the angels Michael, Raphael, Moroni, and Mormon. (It is interesting that Smith claimed to see both Elijah and Elias, since these are different spellings of the same prophet’s name.) He was either the greatest prophet who ever lived or one of the worst liars of all time.

Smith was born in Vermont in December of 1805 and about ten years later moved to Palmyra, New York, about twenty-five miles southeast of Rochester. After four years he and his family moved to nearby Manchester. According to the Mormon tract *The Prophet Joseph Smith’s Testimony*, it was there that he began receiving his revelations. Smith said that in his fifteenth year, the spring of 1820, a revival broke out among the Christian churches in the area. Because of the conflicting doctrines of the different denominations, he was confused about which one he ought to join. He said that he had never prayed aloud, but that upon reading James 1:5 in his Bible (“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask...”) he decided to go into the woods and ask God which church he should join. He said that God the Father and Jesus appeared to him and told him that none of the Christian churches was right, and that all their doctrines were abominations.

According to the Mormon church, Smith told several clergymen his vision and was persecuted from that time onward. Then on Sept. 21, 1823, he received his first visitation from an angel named Moroni. This angel revealed to him that before long he would receive a set of gold plates on which the text of the Book of Mormon was written. He was also to receive “Urim and Thummim,” two stones in silver bows fastened to a breastplate, by which he would be able to translate the plates. The next day the angel took him to the “Hill Cumorah” near Manchester where the plates were buried. (Later, as Smith translated the book he learned that this was the site of the final battle between the Lamanites and the Nephites.) Moroni told Smith that he could not have the plates for four years. Smith was to return and meet with him once a year until then. Finally, on Sept. 22, 1827, Moroni gave Smith the plates. They were about six by eight inches, stacked about six inches high. As evidence of their existence, Mormons cite two groups of witnesses:

i. *The Three Witnesses.*

Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris all claimed that they saw both Moroni and the plates.

ii. *The Eight Witnesses.*

Christian Whitmer, Jacob Whitmer, Peter Whitmer, Jr., John Whitmer, Hiram Page, Joseph Smith, Sr., Hyrum Smith, and Samuel H. Smith all said that they saw the plates but not the angel. Smith said that while he was translating the plates, he copied a number of the characters, which were written in “Reformed Egyptian Hieroglyphics.” He said that Martin Harris took a copy of the characters and of the translation to a Prof. Charles Anthon and Dr. Mitchell in New York, and that both of them certified that the characters and the translation were correct. Smith said he returned the plates to Moroni some time before the first English translation was published in 1830. Only Moroni and God know where they are today.

d. ***Origin of the Book of Mormon: What Really Happened.***

Following is a brief summary of some of the discrepancies between the official Mormon accounts and what actually happened. The fact that the Mormon accounts have changed is evident when one compares them to the photographs of the original documents in the Tanners’ book.

Photo of
the “Hill
Cumorah”
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Mormon
replica of
the plates,
Visual #2-8

i. *Joseph Smith's First Vision.*

There are at least three conflicting accounts of Smith's first vision. The one Mormon missionaries teach is the third, written in 1842. The only one written in Smith's own handwriting, the first, mentions only Jesus in the vision and says that Smith was sixteen at the time. The differences are important.

- The Mormon doctrine of plural gods depends upon Jesus and the Father being two separate entities. This was added later. The Book of Mormon says in many places - Mormon 9:11-12, Ether 3:14, 2 Nephi 31:21, etc. - that God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one God.
- Smith said that he was driven to seek God because of a revival in 1820. The Tanners have scoured microfilm copies of upstate New York newspapers and found that there were revivals in 1817 and 1824, but none in 1820. How could Smith have been mistaken about his age at such a significant time in his life? (Tanner, pp. 148-171)

ii. *The Three Witnesses.*

Neither Cowdery, Whitmer, nor Harris ever claimed to see the actual plates, but said they had a *vision* of the plates and the angel. All three were later excommunicated from the church.

- Cowdery had doubts about the reality of the vision and became a Methodist.
- Harris was noted for instability and changed his religious affiliation thirteen times. One of the changes occurred when he joined the Shakers, a sect that had its own "holy book," *A Holy, Sacred, and Divine Roll and Book: From the Lord God of Heaven to the Inhabitants of Earth*. The Shakers had not eleven, but *sixty* witnesses who claimed to have seen angels deliver the book.
- Whitmer did not renounce his vision of the plates, but felt that he should be Smith's successor instead of Brigham Young. When this did not happen, Whitmer first supported a new "prophet," James Strang, who also claimed he had been given some plates which he translated in the same way as Smith. Strang had his own witnesses. Later, Whitmer threw his lot in with William McLellin. Whitmer then had another vision, that he himself was to be the new Prophet. When this did not come to pass, he left the church. For the rest of his days he wrote extensively against the organization, which he believed had fallen into apostasy under Young and his successors. (Tanner, 94-108)

iii. *The Eight Witnesses.*

All eight of this secondary group were Smith's friends or relatives. Though they signed a statement that they hefted the plates themselves, there are conflicting stories. Martin Harris said that the plates were always in a box with a cloth cover over it, but John Whitmer said that he saw the plates uncovered and turned the leaves. Smith may have had some sort of plates made to fool them. Five of the eight -- all but his father and two brothers -- eventually left the church. (Tanner, 108-110)

iv. *Smith's Method of Translation.*

Smith first said that he had been given a special pair of spectacles by which he was able to do his work of translating. *Doctrine and Covenants* was later changed to say that he used "Urim and Thummim" (names taken from obscure Old Testament objects used by the Jewish priests to obtain guidance from God). Eyewitnesses say otherwise. Three of the people who wrote as he dictated his translation of the plates were his wife Emma and two of the Three Witnesses, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. All said that Smith used a "seer stone," a

stone into which he gazed to receive revelations. He would put the stone into the crown of his hat, then cover his face with the hat so as to exclude external light. In the stone he would see the correct translation and dictate it to them. The plates were not even in the room as he translated. (Tanner, 80-83)

v. *Accuracy of Smith's Translation.*

There really was a Professor Anthon in New York. Despite what Mormons say, he denied the authenticity of the characters and the accuracy of the translation Smith sent to him. The identity of "Dr. Mitchell" is unknown.

Smith said that as he dictated the translation of the plates that he saw in the "seer stone," the word or sentence would not disappear until written exactly, including the spelling. When the Book of Mormon was first published in 1830, he said it was the "most correct of any book on earth." Yet when the second edition came out, it had at least 3,913 *corrections*! Most of them were spelling or grammar errors ("was" was corrected to "were," "is" to "are," etc.), but in Mosiah 21:28 the king's name was changed from Benjamin to Mosiah (Tanner, 128-133). If Smith was telling the truth the book should not have needed *any* corrections, let alone almost four thousand!

vi. *Smith's Translation of the "Book of Abraham."*

In 1835 Smith (acting for the Mormon church) purchased four Egyptian mummies and two scrolls from Michael H. Chandler, who said that they had been bequeathed to him by French traveler Antonio Sebolo. Sebolo said he had obtained them from a catacomb in Egypt. Smith looked at one of the scrolls and declared that it was the "Book of Abraham," written by Abraham himself. This would make it older than any books of the Bible.

The scroll was written in standard Egyptian hieroglyphics, NOT the "Reformed Egyptian" supposedly used in the Book of Mormon. Using his seer stone, Smith translated the scroll into English and included it in *Doctrine and Covenants*. He also produced *Joseph Smith's Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar*, in which he printed several of the Egyptian characters and their meanings. He translated four lines of the papyrus into 49 verses of the Book of Abraham, representing each symbol by dozens of English words.

The papyri were supposedly misplaced after Smith was killed in 1844. However, in 1967 eleven pieces including the original of Smith's "Book of Abraham" were discovered in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and given to the Mormon Church. The church then admitted that it, too, had possessed a papyrus fragment for over 130 years. When photographs of the scrolls were published, translators found that the writing had nothing to do with Abraham at all. It was instead an Egyptian "Book of Breathings," a burial scroll describing the steps to prepare a corpse for funeral services. Smith's *Egyptian Alphabet and Grammar* was **wrong in every detail**. Scholars dated the scrolls to near the time of Christ, almost two millennia later than he said (Tanner, 329-362).

How could anyone have the gall to make up such a story? In Smith's day, Egyptian hieroglyphics were a mystery. The Rosetta Stone which later enabled translators to decipher them had been discovered just a few years before, in 1799. Champollion had finished translating the stone in 1821, but this was not widely known by the time Smith did his "translation" in the 1830s. Either he was the victim of a demonic deception or else he lied about the "Book of Abraham." The Mormon religion, which stands or falls upon his credibility as a prophet, is on shaky ground indeed.

Despite what Mormons say, Joseph Smith was not martyred for his faith.

He died in 1844 with pistols blazing, shot dead by an angry mob in Nauvoo, Illinois. They killed him because his followers, acting on his orders, destroyed the offices and equipment of a newspaper that had been reporting on Mormon activities in the town. He wanted this information kept secret.

An in-depth examination of the rest of his life is beyond the scope of this work, but can be found in the Tanners' book.

e. *Errors in the Book of Mormon.*

Smith's successors have claimed for over a hundred and eighty years that they continue to receive new revelations from God. These revelations, written in *Doctrine and Covenants*, contradict the Book of Mormon in many key areas. For instance, the Book of Mormon condemns polygamy, says that salvation is by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, and says repeatedly that there is only one God - exactly the opposite of Mormon doctrine.

Despite giving greater weight to *Doctrine and Covenants*, Mormons insist that their religion is built on the Book of Mormon. Since they do, let's look at a few of the other errors it contains in addition to the 3,913 corrections. Any book truly inspired by God shouldn't contain even *one* error.

i. Archaeology and the "Reformed Egyptian" Language.

According to Mormon doctrine, the language in which the Book of Mormon was written was used throughout North America. Yet not one inscription using any of these characters has been found anywhere. Despite what Mormon missionaries may tell you, the Smithsonian states that not a single one of the places described in the Book of Mormon has been located (Strobel, 107).

ii. The Birthplace of Jesus.

The Book of Mormon contains at least one blatant error of fact. In Alma 7:10 we read that Jesus was to be born of Mary in Jerusalem. We know from history that this is an error. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, not Jerusalem.

iii. Wrong Alphabet.

There is at least one humorous mistake on Smith's part. In 3 Nephi 9:18 Smith has Jesus preaching to the Nephites in the New World, saying "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end," a direct quote from Revelation 21:6. However, the Book of Mormon says that the Nephites had left Jerusalem about 600 B.C. - centuries before the Greek language became widely known. It would have made no sense for Jesus to use the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet to people who never heard of Greek. He should have used the first and last letters of *their* alphabet instead.

iv. Biological Evidence: American Indians not descended from Israel.

The fundamental premise of the Book of Mormon is that the American Indians are descendants of Israelites. However, recent biological discoveries show that this is false.

The majority of DNA in each person is made of a mixture of genes from the father and mother. However, one section, the *mitochondrial* DNA, comes almost entirely from the mother. Except for occasional mutations, it passes undisturbed from one generation to the next. By focusing only on mitochondrial DNA, scientists can determine which ethnic groups sprang from common female ancestors more recently (closer relatives) and which diverged longer ago (more distant relatives).

Even a cursory search of the Internet for "mitochondrial DNA" and "Mormon" reveals a devastating problem for the Mormon church. Hundreds of reports tell of recent studies of mitochondrial DNA in Native Americans from North, South, and Central America. For example, ex-Mormon biologist Simon

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#2-12

Southerton, Ph.D., reports (<http://www.exmormon.org/why1ft125.htm>) that over 2,000 Native Americans from all over the Americas showed no mitochondrial similarity to the Jewish people, but a very close relationship to those of East Asia such as Mongolians. The DNA data confirm earlier linguistic, biological, and archaeological evidence that the American Indians came over to North America from Asia via the Bering Strait. To put it simply, the evidence indicates that the Book of Mormon is wrong. The American Indians are not descendants of the Jewish people.

When we take into account its suspicious origin, the number of corrections between the first and second editions, the errors it contains, and the fundamental flaw in its basic premise, it is obvious that the Book of Mormon is the work of a man with a fertile imagination, not a great prophet. It is not the Word of God. And if we can't trust it, neither can we trust the other two Mormon "scriptures." *Doctrine and Covenants* and *Pearl of Great Price* fall by the wayside too.

2. THE QUR'AN AND ISLAM.

See Ankerberg & Weldon, *The Facts on Islam*; also Dr. Robert Morey, *An Analysis of the Hadith*, Research & Education Foundation, P.O. Box 141455, Austin, TX 78714. Citations in the Hadith refer to Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan's *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih A-Bukhari*, a nine-volume set published by Kazi Publications, Lahore, Pakistan, 1979.

Over two billion people around the world profess to be Christians, but Islam is not far behind. (Islam is the religion; Muslims are the members.) Muslims believe that the Bible is corrupted and that their holy book, the Koran or Qur'an, is the true word of God. It is certainly true that next to the Bible, it is the most influential book in the world.

Unlike the Bible, which contains a great deal of history and prophecy, the Qur'an is almost entirely a preaching book dedicated to telling how one should live. It contains 114 chapters or "Suras." In general, the longer ones are toward the beginning and the shorter ones are toward the end. Their arrangement is according to tradition, not chronology or doctrine. Each Sura can also be identified by its name, which usually refers to a significant feature in it. Thus, Sura 2 is also known as "Al-Baqarah" (The Cow) because that animal is mentioned prominently.

Islam started when Muhammad (ca. 570-632 A.D.), regarded by Muslims as the greatest of the prophets, claimed to begin receiving revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. (This is a source of confusion when witnessing to Muslims. Because they don't believe in the Trinity, and because of Gabriel's special role, they call *him* the "Holy Spirit.") Muhammad did not write the revelations himself; an illiterate, he dictated what he heard, often while in a trance. At first he was not sure if he was mad or possessed, but later became convinced that he was really hearing from God (Sura 68:1). The Qur'an developed as others wrote his words down on anything available such as leaves, stones, bones, etc. None of the original items have survived to the present.

Muhammad did not bother to collect all the pieces of the Qur'an before his death in 632 A.D. Thus, though Muslims vehemently deny it, a number of contradictory fragments were in circulation for about nineteen years. Muhammad's third successor, a ruler or *Caliph* named Othman, decided to correct this situation. In 651 he had a committee headed by Muhammad's associate Zair-ibn-Thabit compile an official version and decreed that all other copies be burned. Muslims claim that one copy of this "Othmanic Recension" has survived to the present in Turkey, but they refuse to let non-Muslim scholars see it, much less examine it closely.

Many sayings of Muhammad, his wives, and his successors are also found in a col-

Visual
#2-13

lection of writings known as the *Hadith*. Different sects of Muslims accept different numbers of these sayings, ranging from a few thousand to 700,000. Because the Hadith is so massive, few Muslims have read it. They do not realize, for instance, that the Hadith (Vol. 1, no. 63; Vol. 4, no. 709; Vol. 6, no. 507 & 510) confirms the fact that there were discrepancies until Othman compiled the official version of the Qur'an.

a. *The Muslim Concept of God.*

Most Muslims have a deep reverence for God, whom they call "Allah." They are highly offended when one points out the fact that this was the name of the Arabian moon god in Muhammad's day. While that may have been the case then, no Muslim today considers Allah anything less than Almighty God. The name no longer connotes any idol worship.

Some Christians try to win Muslims to Christ by arguing about the origin of the name. The argument is useless. "Allah" is simply the Arabic name for God as they understand Him. Right or wrong, some Arab Christians use the same name to refer to the God of the Bible.

In an attempt to maintain peace, some political leaders even claim that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. This is utter foolishness. The Bible says that Jesus is both the Creator and the Son of God, and that salvation comes only through trusting in His shed blood. The Qur'an states repeatedly that Allah has no son and that salvation is through one's own works. Jesus is presented as merely a great prophet who has nothing to do with our salvation.

The Qur'an says that Allah has 99 names. (Some Muslims have a joke that the reason the camel always seems to have a smirk on his face is that God actually has 100 names, but only the camel knows the hundredth.) Only one of these 99 names has anything to do with love, and then only indirectly: "Al-Wadad," or "The Lover." In his other 98 names Allah is presented as a God of absolute power. Everything in life happens "as Allah wills."

Such a concept of God inevitably leads to fatalism. Man has no choice in anything. Most Muslims are good hearted people and want to help others, but, except for the "Al-Zakat" (see "The Pillars of Islam" below) there is no religious reason to do so. Neither is there any reason to expect help from others, because all is as Allah wills. Sanitation and hygiene in impoverished areas are unimportant because you will get dysentery or you will stay healthy as Allah wills.

A Muslim has no hope of ever having a personal relationship with Allah, who does not communicate directly with humans. (Even Muhammad received his revelations through Gabriel.) Neither can he ever have the assurance that his sins are forgiven. As hard as he tries, he may fail in one small point of Islamic law and be sent to Hell. Since all is as Allah wills, it is possible that Allah may decide to send him to Hell even if he has done everything right.

b. *The Pillars of Islam.*

Islam is a religion of works. It rests on five "Pillars," practices which all good Muslims must perform in order to please Allah. (Of course, since everything is as Allah wills, one can never be sure he has done enough to merit paradise.) In addition, there is a "forgotten pillar" which most Muslims do not mention to outsiders, who are considered "infidels."

i. *The Two Witnesses (Al Shahadatin).*

All Muslims repeat a formula in Arabic which says that Allah is the only God, and that Muhammad is his messenger. *Do not say this out loud in the presence of Muslims! If you ever do, especially if they can entice you to repeat it in Arabic, they will consider you a convert to Islam.* This is not something to take lightly. There have been cases where Americans went to do business in Muslim

Visual
#2-14

Visual
#2-15

Visual
#2-16

countries and, in order to get along better with the local Muslims, repeated the formula. As soon as they did they were automatically considered Muslims. Like it or not, they became subject to Islamic law and their property became Muslim property - just because they said this formula. Even though the American Embassy was able to get the individuals out of the country, they had to leave their property behind. Be very careful what you say around Muslims!

ii. *Ritual Prayers (Al Salat).*

Before beginning prayer, Muslims must perform ceremonial washings. Then they turn their faces toward the holy city of Mecca, say “Allahu akbar” (“God is Great”), and begin their recitation. Muslims are required to pray five times a day: morning, midday, afternoon, sunset, and night. Prayer is not spontaneous and personal but consists of repeating certain ritual formulas and verses from the Qur’an. Praying must be done in Arabic whether one understands the language or not.

iii. *Fasting During the Month of Ramadan (Siam Shahar Ramadan).*

Muslims use a lunar calendar so their months do not coincide with the arrangement of January, February, etc. Their holiest month is Ramadan, during which Muhammad is said to have received the Qur’an. They are required to fast during daylight hours for the entire month. However, they make up for it after dark. Many eat so much at night that they gain weight during their month-long fast instead of losing it.

iv. *Paying of Ritual Alms (Al-Zakat).*

All devout Muslims are required to pay 2.5% of their income as alms to poor Muslims. There is no religious reason to help non-Muslims. One may give a voluntary offering (“Al Sadaka”) to anybody, but Allah only gives him spiritual credit when he helps Muslims.

v. *Pilgrimage to Mecca (Al Hajj).*

Every Muslim who can afford it is required at least once in his life to make a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, the home of Muhammad. First, the pilgrim visits Islam’s holiest shrine, the “Kaaba” in Mecca. This is a cube-shaped building Muslims believe was built by Adam and rebuilt by Abraham. It contains the “black stone,” the only religious object Muhammad did not destroy when he conquered Mecca, part of modern day Saudi Arabia. The crowds of pilgrims circle the Kaaba seven times counterclockwise while chanting prayers. Those who can reach the “black stone” kiss it; those who cannot get through the crowd blow kisses at it. Eyewitnesses say it is nothing but a meteorite.

While on their Hajj, Muslims must also go to Mount Arafat (not to be confused with Mount Ararat in Turkey, where Noah landed) to gather stones to throw in the next part of the ritual. They take the stones to the city of Mina, just outside Mecca, where they try to purge themselves of sins by symbolically stoning the devil as personified by three stone “pillars.” These are not actually pillars; they have been enlarged into three 85 foot long walls so as to accommodate the crowds. In order to maintain normalcy in Saudi Arabia for most of the year, the government limits the timing of the stoning ritual to just a few days. Thus, the more than 2 million people performing this part of their hajj are densely packed in a small area. Stampedes are frequent and kill hundreds of pilgrims every few years.

A final visit to the Kaaba satisfies the requirements of the Hajj, but while in the area most Muslims also visit Muhammad’s mosque and grave in Medina. Unlike Jesus, he’s still in his tomb.

Visual
#2-17

vi. *The Forgotten Pillar: Holy War (Jihad).*

Most Muslims are peace-loving people. However, despite repeated claims that their religion is one of peace, it is not. Anyone who reads the Qur'an realizes that the ultimate goal of Islam is world subjugation. Most Muslims ignore or try to hide the fact that the Qur'an commands them to fight for the spread of their faith and, if necessary, to kill the enemies of Islam. We may deplore the actions of Muslim terrorists such as those who butchered hundreds of children in Chechnya, but they are merely following the commands of their religion.

One of the not-so-hidden goals of the religion of Islam is the destruction of every Jew. Two passages of the Hadith are particularly explicit:

"You (i.e. Muslims) will fight with the Jews till some of them will hide behind stones. The stones will (betray them) saying, 'O 'Abdullah (i.e. slave of Allah)! There is a Jew hiding behind me; so kill him.'" (Vol. 4, Book 52, #176), and

"The Hour will not be established until you fight with the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say. 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'" (Vol. 4, Book 52, #177)

Though Muslims comprise a fifth of the world's population, at least half the majority of known terrorist organizations in the world are Muslim (www.jihad-watch.org). Ten of the others are communist groups, two are Israeli, and most of the rest are clustered in politically divided countries such as Ireland and Greece.

Don't let anyone tell you Islam is peaceful. If you look at the trouble spots in the world, you'll see that Muslims are involved in the vast majority of them. At present, there are attempts to establish Islamic governments in Chechnya, Kashmir, Kosovo, Indonesia, the Philippines, and even parts of Europe and the U.S. What is happening now mirrors the spread of Islam through the centuries. Every nation which has become Muslim has done so by force rather than peaceful persuasion. Most Muslim organizations still have the same aim: take over the world for Allah, by any means necessary.

c. ***Major Divisions of Islam.***

Not all Muslims believe exactly the same things. About ninety percent are Sunnis, around ten percent are Shiites, a few million are mystics known as Sufis, some are American Black Muslims, and a relatively small number belong to other sects.

i. *Sunni.*

Muhammad died almost 1400 years ago, in 632 A.D. Ever since, there has been dissension over who should have succeeded him as the leader of Islam. Sunnis believe that the caliphs (starting with Abu Bakr, Omar, and Othman) were the proper successors of Muhammad, as opposed to the Shi'ites, who believe his son-in-law Ali should have succeeded him. They've been fighting over it for almost 1400 years!

In addition to the Qur'an, different groups of Sunnis accept anywhere between 300,000 and 700,000 sayings of the Hadith. In general, Sunnis have a reputation for being the moderates of Islam. There are exceptions, though:

- The radical "al-Gamaa al-Islamiya" or "Islamic Group," which has its roots in Egypt, is suspected of carrying out the February 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, which killed six and injured over a thousand. Their motive? To pull Egypt away from the United States and convert it to a pure Islamic republic. They see violence as the most effective way to achieve this goal.
- Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda group responsible for the 2001 destruction of

the World Trade Center consists mostly of Sunnis.

- The terrorists responsible for the 2004 massacre of hundreds of schoolchildren in Russia were Sunnis attempting to set up an independent Islamic state in Chechnya.
- Many of the suicide bombers in Iraq are Sunnis, targeting Shiites whom they believe are infidels.

ii. *Shia.*

Though Shiites accept all of the Qur'an as the word of Allah, they believe that Othman deliberately left out many of the original verses which would have undermined his credibility as Muhammad's successor. They believe that Muhammad's son-in-law Ali, assassinated in 661, should have succeeded him and that one of Muhammad's descendants should be the leader of Islam. Shiites confirm only about 1,200 of the hundreds of thousands of sayings of Al-Hadith.

Shiites comprise about ten percent of the Islamic world, or roughly a hundred million. Most live either in Iran or in Lebanon, though a significant number are in Iraq. They tend to be the militant arm of Islam, including such terrorist groups as Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah, the "Party of God." The members of such organizations believe that they are in a holy war or *jihad* against the rest of the world (including Sunnis) and that any tactics, including the killing of innocent bystanders, are justified.

iii. *Sufis.*

Sufis are the mystics of Islam, including such extreme groups as the "Whirling Dervishes" and "Howling Dervishes." They are not as concerned with keeping the letter of the Islamic law (see the "Pillars of Islam" above) as most Muslims, because, unlike the vast majority, they believe that one can have a personal relationship with Allah. They hope to achieve this through meditation and mystical practices. Movie buffs may remember that Sufis were the group Danny DeVito joined in the motion picture "Jewel of the Nile."

iv. *Black Muslims.*

The Black Muslim movement, which includes Louis Farrakhan's "Nation of Islam," is only a few decades old. It is far outside the mainstream of Islam, focusing much more on political and racial issues than on religion. Many of its members feel that Christianity is a white man's religion but that Islam is for all men. They do not seem to realize or care that historical Islam is Arabic through and through, and that they are latecomers who must conform to its traditions. Nor do they seem aware that the Hadith reports in many places (Vol. 1, no. 63; Vol. 2, no. 122; Vol. 2, no. 141; Vol. 1, no. 367) that Muhammad was a white man. He called black people "raisin heads" (Hadith, Vol. 1, no. 662; Vol. 9, no. 256), and said that to dream of a black woman was an evil omen of a coming epidemic of disease (Vol. 9, nos. 162 & 163). Is this really a religion where black people should feel at home?

Many Black Muslims blame white Europeans for slavery in the Americas but neglect the role Muslims played. The Europeans were not able to go into central Africa to buy or kidnap blacks, so they relied on Muslims to do it for them. Muslims would not take other Muslims as slaves. However, blacks, who were not Muslims, were fair game.

The 1992 movie "Malcolm X" rekindled interest in the Black Muslim religion. Few realize that Malcolm X was assassinated by fellow Black Muslims after he made a pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca. While there, he realized that Islam was not primarily a black man's religion but was dominated instead by Arab influence. He began to spread this message upon his return to

America, upsetting some militant black leaders. They had him executed to silence him.

Though most Muslims believe that Allah is very distant from humankind, some Black Muslims who follow the late Elijah Muhammad hold a very different belief. They say that Allah took on human flesh in the form of the prophet W. Fard Muhammad, who came to prominence in Detroit in 1930 then disappeared four years later. Likewise, those who follow Louis Farrakhan closely have heard him say that he is Jesus returned in the flesh. (Documented on *The 700 Club* television broadcast, August, 1996)

d. *Islam - a Religion for Men.* (Verse numbers cited are approximate. Dawood's translation of the Qur'an does not list the number of every verse.)

The Qur'an is full of promises to men about Paradise. It will be as vast as heaven and earth (3:132) and populated by a "band of brothers" (15:49). There will be rivers of wine, milk, and honey. The men there will be attended by eternally young boys (56:10, 76:16). For their reward they will be given high-bosomed maidens ("houris"), bashful virgins who will be their companions forever (44:50, 52:20-24, 56:10-11, 55:55-69, 78:31 et al.) in a garden of pleasure.

How about women? Though the Qur'an says in two places (9:72, 13:24) that some will be admitted to paradise, there is no description of what it will be like for them. One can only hope for their sake that conditions there will be better than on earth. A few examples of what the Qur'an says about women:

i. Men Superior to Women.

"Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other... As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them." (4:34)

Notice, there does not need to be any actual disobedience to justify a beating - just a man's fear that it *may* happen.

ii. Daughters vs. Sons.

Daughters are not as good as sons (37:152, 17:40). Their birth darkens the countenance of a father and brings him gloom (43:17). The birth of a daughter is such bad news that a father must choose between bearing the shame or burying her alive (16:59).

iii. Matters of Justice.

Men have status above women in matters of justice (2:228). It takes two women's testimony to equal that of one man (2:282). Males receive twice as much inheritance as females (4:11, 4:177). If a wife dies childless, her husband inherits one-half of her estate; if a husband does, the wife only gets one-fourth of his (4:12).

iv. Different Sexual Standards for Men and Women.

A man may have up to four wives, and may have sex with as many slave girls as he wishes - even if they are married to slave men (4:3, 4:24, 33:52, 70:28). Women may have only one husband. A man who commits fornication but repents is forgiven (4:16), but a woman who does is confined to her house until she dies (4:14).

The Hadith is even harsher than the Qur'an in its statements about women. It says (Vol. 1, nos. 28 & 301; Vol. 2, no. 161) that the majority of those in Hell will be women. This is because women are deficient in religion and intelligence (Vol. 2, no. 541; Vol. 3, no. 826). Many of those who make it to paradise will be chained in pavilions to satisfy the sexual urges of men (Vol. 6, no. 402).

e. *Development of the Modern Qur'an.*

Muslims insist that the Qur'an of today is exactly as it was when Muhammad dic-

tated it. They will accept no criticism of the Qur'an from non-Muslim scholars. Muslim scholars who criticize it do so at the risk of their lives.

Visual
#2-21

You might remind your class of the plight of Salman Rushdie, a Muslim author who wrote a novel called *The Satanic Verses*. For drawing attention to some embarrassing verses of the Qur'an (22:52-53) in which Muhammad said he was not sure if he was being inspired by God or the devil, Rushdie was sentenced to death by Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. Though he repented and apologized, it took many years for Muslim leaders to lift the death sentence. He had to live in hiding for years.

Despite what Muslims say, they cannot prove that the Qur'an has remained unchanged.

- None of the original fragments on which Muhammad's followers wrote have survived until the present.
- There were four different versions of the Qur'an in circulation from Muhammad's death until Caliph Othman declared one version official in 651. (You will make a Muslim very angry if you point this out. He will vehemently deny it, since he is probably unaware that the Hadith confirms this in places such as Vol. 6, nos. 507, 509, & 510.)
- Othman had all manuscripts of the nonofficial versions destroyed, except for a few surviving fragments which Muslims diligently try to hide from infidels.
- Muslims will not let any non-Muslim scholars see the one copy of the Othmanic Recension they claim has survived until the present.
- Some Shiite Muslims say that Othman left out many verses of the Qur'an which would undermine his claim to authority. The Hadith confirms (Vol. 4, nos. 57, 62, 69, 299; Vol. 6, nos. 509-511) that certain verses are missing or lost.

The weight of evidence indicates that the Qur'an has changed.

For those interested in learning more, any Christian bookstore can furnish several books on Islam which show that the Muslim claim of perfect preservation is wrong.

f. *The Qur'an's Claims Of Inspiration.*

Any book that claims to be the Word of God should offer some means of testing that claim. The Bible, for instance, contains thousands of detailed prophecies and says that any prophet whose word does not come to pass has not spoken for God. What credentials does the Qur'an offer? Very few. It admits that though God could have furnished signs to confirm it (6:35), He did not (10:20, 13:7, 17:59, 29:50).

Visual
#2-22

i. *Prophecy.*

The Qur'an makes many statements about the future Day of Judgment which cannot yet be tested. Other than that, it makes a grand total of two fulfilled prophecies -- statements concerning events that were in the future at the time of writing and later came to pass. The first, Sura 30:1, says that "The Greeks have been defeated in a neighbouring land. But in a few years they shall themselves gain victory..."

The Persians had defeated the Greeks in 615 A.D. but the two had been fighting for years. It was not too dangerous to predict that the Greeks would eventually win a battle, especially since Muhammad did not say when it would happen.

The second "prophecy" was written after Muhammad was driven away from Mecca. In it, he said that he would return. It came true; he returned with a great band of armed followers and entered the city. If he hadn't, hardly anyone would have ever heard of Islam. This was a very safe prediction: before he wrote it, he had already signed a treaty saying that he would be allowed to return to Mecca in peace.

ii. *Questioning Not Allowed.*

The Qur'an is not to be doubted because it says "This book is not to be doubted." (2:1)

iii. *Literary Quality.* "This Qur'an could not have been devised by any but God." (10:37) Why not? Because it claims to be of such quality that no one, especially not an illiterate like Muhammad, could produce even one chapter of literature like it (2:23, 10:38). Elsewhere (11:13) it challenges the unbeliever to produce ten such chapters. However, since no standard is given by which one can determine whether his work is of the same quality as the Qur'an, this is purely a matter of opinion.

iv. *Nothing Bad Happened to Muhammad.*

How do we know that Muhammad didn't make up the Qur'an? Because Allah says,

"Had he invented lies concerning Us, We would have seized him by the right hand and severed his heart's vein..." (69:45)

And since no such misfortune befell Muhammad, the Qur'an must be what he said it is! (11:35, 52:30) Yet the Qur'an clearly says of those who turn away from Allah's revelations that

"Had it been His will to scourge them for their sins, He would have hurried on their punishment; but He has set for them a predestined time they cannot evade." (18:58)

Many other passages (7:99, 10:11, 10:69, 31:24, 35:45 et al.) also say that evil-doers are not always quickly punished for their transgressions. How, then, can a Muslim be sure that Muhammad was not a deceiver whose punishment God delayed? He cannot. He must simply believe, and hope he is right.

v. *Contradictions.*

The Qur'an says of itself and its critics that:

"If it had not come from God, they could have surely found in it many contradictions." (4:82)

In Sections (h) and (i) following, we will take up this challenge. We will see that the Qur'an contains many internal contradictions, as well as blatant errors.

g. *The Qur'an's Teaching about the Bible.*

To the surprise of most Christians, the Qur'an states throughout that it is sent to confirm the Book that was already sent by Allah, the Bible. It maintains that Allah and the God of the Bible are one and the same, but explains the contradictions between itself and the Bible by saying that Christians and Jews have corrupted His revelation.

The Qur'an speaks so highly of the Bible that Christians could use it as a starting point to begin witnessing to Muslims. We can remind them that Muslims are commanded to believe the earlier Scriptures (29:27, 35:32, 41:42, 45:16, 46:13, 87:19 et al.) and to surrender to the God revealed in them:

"Be courteous when you argue with the People of the Book, except with those among them who do evil. Say: 'We believe in that which is revealed to us and which was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one. To Him we surrender ourselves.'" (29:46-47)

i. *"People of the Book" Instructed to Obey the Bible.*

Since the Qur'an contradicts the Bible on so many points, we might expect that it would tell Christians and Jews to abandon their Scriptures. Surprisingly, it says the opposite:

"If the People of the Book accept the true faith and keep from evil, We will pardon them their sins and admit them to the gardens of delight. If they

observe the Torah and the Gospel and what is revealed to them from their Lord, they shall enjoy abundance from above and from beneath.” (5:63) According to the Qur’an, then, Christians and Jews are to follow their own Book. What possible reason could there be for them to convert to Islam? However, Vol. 2, no. 414 of the Hadith contradicts the Qur’an. It says that Christians and Jews are cursed because they took the graves of their prophets as places for worship.

ii. *Uncorrupted Bible Had to Exist.*

Sura 5:63 quoted above only makes sense if the People of the Book had an uncorrupted version of the Bible available during Muhammad’s lifetime. As we will see in Chapter Three, the modern translations of the Bible are based on manuscripts that go back hundreds of years before Muhammad’s birth. All the ancient manuscripts are in extremely close agreement with each other. If an uncorrupted version existed as the Qur’an implies, it had to be substantially the same as the versions we have today.

We have texts of the Old Testament dating to at least 600 years before Muhammad and complete New Testament manuscripts dating 300 years before his time. Since the Qur’an says it was given to confirm the Bible, it stands to reason that in cases where the two contradict each other the Qur’an must yield.

h. *Internal Contradictions in the Qur’an.*

Muslim scholars contend that the Qur’an is the only book ever to “withstand the microscopic and telescopic scrutiny of one and all, without the book stumbling anywhere” (Ankerberg & Weldon, 1991, 30). However, even a casual reading of the Qur’an reveals many places where it contradicts itself. Following are just a few.

i. *The Death of Jesus.*

Muslims believe that Jesus was a great prophet but not the Son of God. (The Qur’an says emphatically that God has no son.) Sura 4:157 says that he did not actually die, but that people only thought He did. Yet in 3:55 God warns him to prepare for his imminent death, which He was going to cause in order to lift Jesus up to Himself and exalt his followers. Jesus Himself prophesied in 19:33 that He would die and be raised up alive. So did He die or not?

ii. *The Creation Account.*

In Sura 41:9-13 we read the sequence of activity during Creation:

“Say: Do you indeed disbelieve in Him who created the earth in two days? And do you make other gods His equals? The Lord of the Universe is He. He set upon the earth mountains towering high above it. He pronounced His blessing upon it, and in four days provided it with sustenance for all alike. Then, turning to the sky, which was but a cloud of vapour, He said to it and to the earth: ‘Come forward both, willingly or perforce.’ “We will come willingly, they answered. In two days He formed the sky into seven heavens, and to each heaven He assigned its task. We decked the lowest heaven with brilliant stars and guardian comets.”

Adding this up, 2 days (earth) + 4 days (its sustenance) + 2 days (heavens) = 8 days. Everywhere else (7:54, 10:3, 11:7, 25:58, 32:3, 50:38, 57:3 et al.) we read that the process took six days. Which was it, six or eight?

Muslim apologists try to reconcile the discrepancy by saying that the two days of heaven’s creation overlapped with two of the days of the earth’s creation. However, the passage clearly states that *after* the earthly creation was done, *then* he formed the heavens. The text indicates that there was no overlap.

Notice also that the Qur’an places both the stars and comets in the lowest heaven. This would be hard for an astronomer to accept, since comets are part

Visual
#2-24

of the solar system but stars may be many light years away.

iii. *Lot's Wife and Sodom.*

Lot's wife died at Sodom when she stayed behind (7:84, 15:61). No, she went with him and then turned back (11:83). The city was either destroyed by rain (25:40, 26:168, 27:57) or by stones in a whirlwind (51:32, 54:33), or it was turned upside down by a shower of clay-stones (11:83).

The Bible says it was destroyed by fire and brimstone.

iv. *Fate of Noah's Sons.*

Throughout the Qur'an we read that all of Noah's sons survived the Flood (21:76, 37:72 et al.); yet in 11:41-43 we read that one of his sons refused to come on board the Ark and was drowned. (We also find in 66:10 that even though Noah's wife made it through the Flood, she was sent to Hell after she died.)

v. *Intercession.*

Intercession is useless with God (33:24, 36:23). On the other hand, some can intercede (19:87, 34:23), but only if they have God's permission (2:255). No, never mind - only God can intercede (6:51).

vi. *Killing of Children.*

Killing children is wrong (6:137-140), unless they are daughters, in which case a father must decide whether to bear the shame of their birth or bury them alive (16:59). Yes, it's in the Qur'an.

vii. *Dealing With Evil.*

How should we reward evil? With evil (42:40). No, with good (41:34).

viii. *Atonement for Sin.*

Alms atone for some sins (2:271). On second thought, a man cannot offer ransom for his own sins (6:70). Then again, good deeds can make amends for sins (11:114).

ix. *Conditions in Hell.*

Hell is a place with no water to drink (7:50). Well, maybe scalding water (6:70, 10:4). No, the damned will drink blood instead (38:58). The fire there will leave nothing (74:31), but the suffering of sinners will last as long as heaven and earth endure (11:106). This is because as fast as their skins burn up, they will continually be given new skins (4:56).

x. *"Holy War."*

How about "Holy War" (Jihad)? "There shall be no compulsion in religion" (2:256). Though there is no compulsion, fighting for God is obligatory (2:216) and those who do not fight will be sternly punished (9:39). Sounds a lot like compulsion, doesn't it?

If you fight for God, whether you live or die, He will richly reward you (4:74), unless you flee during battle, in which case you are condemned to Hell (8:16).

xi. *Creation of Man.*

The first man was created from water (25:52), as were all other creatures (24:45). No, he was created from dry clay (6:2, 17:61, 15:25).

xii. *The Source of Misfortune.*

Only good comes from God; evil is from yourself (4:80). Your misfortune is the fruit of your own labor (42:31). On second thought, God is the author of misfortune (57:23).

xiii. *The Mountains.*

The mountains are immovable (15:19, 50:7), except that they will pass away (27:80).

xiv. *Treatment of Unbelievers.*

How should a Muslim treat an unbeliever? He should be ruthless (48:29). No, be courteous when arguing with the People of the Book (29:46). Then again, show the unbelievers no mercy (47:34). But maybe you should bear with them and wish them peace (43:89). No, they're your enemies; when you fight them, strike their heads off and take them captive, then grant them freedom or take ransom from them (47:4-5). An interesting vision indeed: headless prisoners being set free after they pay ransom.

The only way Muslims can deceive people into believing that Islam is a peaceful, tolerant religion is by telling us only the good parts of the Qur'an and leaving out the bad ones.

i. ***The Doctrine of Abrogation.***

These are but a few of the places where the Qur'an contradicts itself. So how do Muslims deal with these obvious contradictions? They can always refer to passages in the Qur'an which say that Allah is free to replace an earlier revelation with a different one, that is, to *abrogate* it. For instance, Sura 2:106 says:

"If We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We will replace it by a better one or one similar."

Here is the logical consequences of the doctrine of abrogation. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is God's final revelation and that Muhammad is the last of the prophets. But what if Allah changes his mind? What's to prevent him from sending another prophet to abrogate the revelations of Muhammad and the Qur'an?

The doctrine of abrogation renders Islam a logically indefensible system. That's not all that's wrong with it, though. Let's look at some blatant errors in the pages of the Qur'an.

j. ***Some Errors in the Qur'an.***

The Qur'an reflects the state of Muhammad's knowledge, which was very limited concerning both science and the Bible. A few of his historical and scientific errors:

i. *Crucifixion.*

Muhammad seems to have not been completely familiar with the story of Joseph, Egypt, Moses, Pharaoh, and the Exodus. (See Genesis 37 to Exodus 14). The Qur'an has Joseph in prison in Egypt interpret the dream of Pharaoh's baker to say that he would be crucified (12:41). Pharaoh also threatens to crucify his magicians when they believed in Moses' God (7:124, 20:70, 26:49). The problem? Crucifixion was not invented until the rise of the Phoenician civilization, centuries after Joseph and Moses. (Rome adopted it still later.) Muhammad was off by hundreds of years on Pharaoh's method of execution.

ii. *Ezra and the Jews.*

The Qur'an says that Jews believed Ezra ("Ezzes" in Arabic) was the Son of God (9:30). It is not clear where Muhammad got this idea, but this has never been a doctrine of any sect of Judaism.

iii. *The Ruins of Sodom.*

The Qur'an says that the ruins of Sodom are for a sign (15:77, 25:40, 29:33). This is interesting, because no one is sure exactly where the ruins of Sodom are. What kind of sign can an unknown place be?

iv. *Seven Earths.*

The Bible mentions three heavens and the Qur'an seven. We have no scientific way to test this. However, the Bible only tells of one earth while the Qur'an says there are seven (65:12). We can easily look for planets. Where are the other six earths? They can't be planets in the solar system, because there are a

Visual
#2-25

Visual
#2-26

total of eight (major) planets, not seven.

Muslim apologists such as Bucaille (1978) try to explain away this error by saying that seven is merely meant to indicate a large number, and that it is now known that there are many planets throughout the universe. This is silly. Even if there are many planets around other stars (see Chapter 9), the Arabs were quite adept at both mathematics and astronomy. They were well aware of the concept of enormous numbers. Surely Muhammad could have picked a number larger than seven.

v. *Comets and Meteors.*

The Qur'an says that comets are fiery (37:9, 72:9). This is simply wrong. NASA flights tell us that there is no fire in a comet; it is basically a dirty snowball which glows as sunlight shines on escaping gases. The Qur'an also tells us that meteors and comets are thrown down from heaven to pursue devils who attempt to eavesdrop (15:10, 37:8). The Hadith says the same about stars (Vol. 4, chap. 3, p. 282). Since there is no air to carry the sound in space where comets and stars are, how could the devils eavesdrop on anything?

vi. *Conception of Human Beings.*

The Qur'an says that man is made from "clots of blood" (40:67, 75:38, 96:1). Biology in Muhammad's day was not very advanced. He apparently thought that the sperm united with a clot of blood inside the woman. He did not know that the blood in the menstrual flow occurs as the uterus sheds its lining. The sperm unites with the egg, not a clot of blood.

The Hadith says (Vol. 4, no. 546) that Gabriel told Muhammad why a child looks like its father or mother: it resembles whichever of its parents reached "discharge" first during sex. So much for DNA!

vii. *Sky Held Up With Supports.*

The sky would fall, were it not for the fact that God holds it up (22:65). He spread the heavens like a canopy, and furnished it with strong support (21:32).

viii. *Sun and Moon Orbit the Earth.*

The sun and moon are each in their own orbit around the earth (21:33, 36:40).

Dhul-Qarnayn (Alexander the Great) once traveled to the west until he saw where the sun set, in a pool of black mud (18:84).

Remember that the Qur'an says that if it were not from God critics could surely find many contradictions. We have seen at least fourteen of them, as well as eight blatant errors. According to the Qur'an itself, then, it is not from God!

Finally, let's consider some of the places where the Qur'an flatly contradicts the Bible.

k. ***Biblical Contradictions and Fantastic Stories in the Qur'an.***

Much of Muhammad's knowledge of the Bible was based on fables or writings rejected by the Christian church as spurious. As a result, there are many contradictions between the Qur'an and the Bible, as well as some fantastic stories. Here are a few:

i. *Childhood Miracles of Jesus.*

Jesus spoke while a newborn baby and preached from the cradle (3:46, 5:110, 19:30). As a child he made a bird of clay and breathed into it so that it lived (3:49, 5:111).

The story about the clay bird was an old fable rejected by Christians. The Bible tells us that Jesus did not do the first of his signs until after His baptism at about age thirty.

ii. *The Healing of Job.*

Job was restored by stamping his feet, causing a spring to come up (38:40). The

Bible says he was restored when he prayed for his friends.

iii. *Joseph's Family in Egypt.*

The Qur'an says both of Joseph's parents were alive in Egypt (12:99). The Bible tells us that his mother died years before, at the birth of his brother Benjamin.

iv. *The Birthplace of Jesus.*

Mary gave birth to Jesus by a palm tree in the desert, alone (19:22). This is blatantly false. The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is a well- documented historical event.

v. *Moses and Haman.*

Moses was sent to Haman in Egypt (28:5, 40:24-37). Muhammad had his time periods wrong. Haman was a character in the book of Esther, not Exodus.

vi. *Killing of Male Israelite Babies.*

Pharaoh began to kill male Israelite babies only after Moses came to him (7:127). This wrecks the whole story of Moses. It was because of the killing of babies that he was brought up in Pharaoh's house in the first place.

vii. *The "Unlettered Prophet."*

The Qur'an says (7:157) that both the Torah and the Gospel prophesy the coming of an "unlettered prophet" (Muhammad). There is no mention of such a person in either the Old or New Testament. Muslims argue that in Deuteronomy 18:18 Moses foretold the coming of another prophet like himself from the brethren of the Jews. They point out similarities between Moses and Muhammad and argue that Arabs are brethren of the Jews. However, they ignore verse 15, which says that the prophet would be from the *midst* of Israel. They also ignore the New Testament, which in Acts 3:20-26 and Acts 7:35-55 clearly names Jesus as the object of the prophecy. They appeal to Isaiah 29:12 to support the concept of an unlearned prophet but ignore verse 11, which shows that the focus of the passage is on the lack of understanding rather than upon individuals.

Muslims are so desperate to find Muhammad in the Bible that they appeal to Song of Solomon 5:16, which says prophetically of Jesus that "he is altogether lovely." They point out that the Hebrew word for "lovely" is *machmad*, which is similar to the Arabic name Muhammad. This is ridiculous. *Machmad* is used nine times in the Old Testament and is simply an adjective. The fact that it may have the same root as "Muhammad" means nothing. The name "David" and the Hebrew word for "uncle" have the same root. If we use the same logic Muslims do to make *machmad* refer to Muhammad, every reference to an uncle must be a reference to David, and vice versa. This is as preposterous as trying to read Muhammad into the Song of Solomon.

viii. *Solomon's Extraordinary Powers.*

The Qur'an says that Solomon had power over the wind (21:81, 34:11, 38:36). He could carry on conversations with animals (27:19-29). God assigned devils to him who dived for him into the sea (21:82). He also had "jinn" as servants, who made metal items for him (27:17).

ix. *Human-to-Ape Reverse Evolution.*

God once became angry with some of the People of the Book and practiced reverse evolution: He turned some of them into "detested apes" (2:65, 7:166) and swine (5:60).

k. *Amazing Stories in the Hadith.*

The Hadith also contains some interesting stories. Morey's *An Analysis of the Hadith* lists dozens of examples. Just a few of them:

- Adam was ninety feet tall (Vol. 4, no. 543). He must have had incredibly strong

bones. We would have to wonder, too: if he was that big, how big were Eve and her children Cain, Abel, and the others? Imagine giving birth to a two ton baby!

- Satan stays in the upper part of the nose all night (Vol. 4, no. 516). In the morning Muhammad would suck water up his nostrils and blow it out to cleanse them.
- The angel Gabriel has 600 wings (Vol. 6, no. 380).
- Food would shout and glorify Allah as Muhammad ate it (Vol. 4, no. 779). Picture yourself eating a talking hamburger!
- In at least 11 places the Hadith says that Muhammad cut the moon in half with his sword. It doesn't say how the halves were joined back together, but since the moon is about 240,000 miles away he must have had a BIG sword.

A Muslim friend once told the author that there really is a visible split on the moon. This is true -- the moon does have a fault line known as the "straight wall" in the area known as Mare Nubium. However, it is only about 70 miles long (Wood, 2009). It surely does not split the moon in half; in fact, it is only about *one-thousandth* of the way around the moon.

We could go on and on, but it should be obvious to anyone but a Muslim that the Qur'an and Hadith, while highly influential pieces of literature, are emphatically NOT the Word of Almighty God. Most Muslims sincerely want to please God, but they cannot succeed in doing so by following these false "holy books." Muslims need Jesus just like everybody else does.

3. **"THE WATCHTOWER" AND JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES.**

The "Jehovah's Witnesses" we see going door-to-door on Saturday mornings are members of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. The organization's headquarters are in Brooklyn, New York. As of January 2021, its worldwide membership was estimated at over 8 million.

****** A note about the name "Jehovah" ******

When we hear the word "God," all of us know that it refers to the Creator of the universe. However, "God" is His title, not His name. The word "God" is a translation of the Old Testament Hebrew words *Elohim* and *El* and the New Testament Greek word *Θεος* (*Theos*), which are occasionally used to refer to other beings besides Almighty God. (See Jn. 10:34)

The Creator revealed His personal name thousands of times throughout the Old Testament. It was rendered JHVH or YHWH in the Hebrew scrolls. (The Hebrew letters do not have an exact English equivalent.) Since the Hebrew text was written without vowels, English-speaking people pronounce His name Jehovah or Yahweh, depending upon which vowels we insert. However, most Old Testament Jewish leaders felt His name was too holy to say out loud. Whenever they encountered the name YHWH while reading aloud, they would substitute "Adonai," which means "Lord." Likewise, the New Testament authors used the Greek word *Kurios* (Lord) whenever they quoted an Old Testament passage that used YHWH. Most English translations follow this custom. Out of reverence, Old Testament translators usually render YHWH as LORD in all capital letters.

Jehovah's Witnesses criticize this practice. Their version of the Bible, the "New World Translation," retains the name Jehovah throughout the Old Testament and even inserts it into the New Testament a number of times. While one might agree with keeping the name Jehovah in the Old Testament, it does not occur in any Greek New Testament manuscript. The only place one could possibly put "Jehovah" into the New Testament is in Rev. 19:1 and 3, where the heav-

only multitude cries "Hallelujah" - a Hebrew word which means "Praise Jah," a shortened form of Yahweh or Jehovah. Throughout the New Testament, God is usually referred to as Ὁ Θεός (*the* God) or as "Father." Thus, we need not be intimidated by Jehovah's Witnesses claiming to be the sole preservers of God's name. They know Him only as a distant Old Testament figure; we know Him as Father.

Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be Christians but they deny the deity of Jesus Christ. They believe that He was known in the Old Testament as Michael the archangel, the first being Jehovah created, and that after His own creation he did the rest of the work of creation in cooperation with Jehovah. Witnesses believe that Jesus opened the way to get to God, but that each individual must do enough good works to earn his way to eternal life. This eternal life will be lived in an earthly paradise, not in heaven.

a. *Doctrines of The Watchtower.*

This is a religion of denial. While claiming to believe the Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses deny many of the major doctrines of Christianity.

i. *Salvation.*

The Watchtower teaches that it is Jehovah's organization and is His sole method of reaching out to mankind. It says that anyone not in a right relationship with it -- that is, anyone who does not submit to its rules and regulations -- displeases Jehovah. Since the organization teaches that there is no hell, such individuals will simply cease to exist at the end of their lives.

Though Witnesses claim to be Christians, their preaching seldom mentions Christ. Their message is that Jehovah is setting up a kingdom in the earth, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and that only those who join it can be saved.

Some individual Witnesses find themselves torn between the Bible and Watchtower doctrine. They are familiar enough with the Bible to recognize that even in their translation of the Bible, Eph. 2:8-10 says that we are saved by grace through faith, and even the faith is not our own doing, it is the gift of God. No one will be saved by good works apart from faith in Jesus Christ - no matter who tells us otherwise. If salvation were available any other way, then Christ died in vain (Gal. 2:21). Nevertheless, members accept the Watchtower's doctrine that no one can be saved without joining it and following its rules. Rather than investigate the conflict, they spend a great deal of time in the "Kingdom Hall" (their local church building) role-playing and learning how to persuade outsiders to join the organization.

Witnesses believe that if they please Jehovah by doing enough good works such as door-to-door preaching, book sales, and other activities prescribed by the Watchtower, they will live through the coming Battle of Armageddon and enter into an earthly paradise. If they have died before then, Jehovah will re-create them and place them here to enjoy eternity on earth.

ii. *The Deity of Christ.*

The Watchtower says that Jesus was the archangel Michael until He took on a human form. This doctrine is a variation of *Arianism*, one of the oldest heresies confronted by the early Christian church. It was first condemned in the 300s.

Chapter 1 of the book of Hebrews shows that this belief is false. Though Witnesses adamantly oppose any form of "creature worship," even they must admit that the angels are commanded to worship Jesus. Nevertheless, Witnesses counter that Michael is not like other angels but is unique because he is the only being the Bible specifically calls an *archangel*. They ignore Daniel 10:13, which identifies him as *one* of the chief princes. Though he is a magnificent

Visual
#2-29

Visual
#2-30

being, he is not the Son of God. In Jude 9 Michael tells Satan, “The Lord rebuke you.” Since Michael appeals to the Lord, he must not be the Lord!

The Watchtower scoffs at Christians who worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God. However, when pressed, Witnesses have to admit that they believe in not one but two separate Gods. Jehovah is the “Almighty God,” and Jesus is the “Mighty God.” Because the organization tells them that Jesus is not almighty God in the flesh, they must ignore or explain away many Scriptures which say that He is. A few examples:

- The Greek word θεος (theos) is sometimes used to indicate an authority figure, as in Jn. 10:34. However, whenever it is used with the definite article “the” (in Greek, ὁ Θεος, or THE God), it always refers to Almighty God. In Matthew 1:23 we see that Jesus was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Matthew adds the explanatory note that Emmanuel means “God with us.” He does not merely use θεος, but specifically identifies Jesus as ὁ Θεος -- *the* God, the title used exclusively for Almighty God.
- In Acts 20:28, Paul is quoted as saying
“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”
He explicitly uses the definite article before “θεος,” indicating that the blood Jesus shed was the blood of THE God.
- Jesus Himself told us of His origin. In John 16:27-30 we see three times that He “came from” the Father. The Greek word translated “came from” is *exelthon*, which means to “come out from.” Jesus “came out from” the Father. He was begotten, not created.
- The Watchtower makes a distinction between Jesus, the “Mighty God,” and Jehovah, the “Almighty God.” Isaiah 9:6 identifies Jesus by the former title. But Jeremiah 32:18, using exactly the same Hebrew words, says that *Jehovah* is the “Mighty God.” The identical title refers to both Jesus and Jehovah. They are one and the same.
- Isaiah 43:10, the verse from which the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” is derived, says
“Ye [are] my witnesses, saith the LORD [Jehovah] , and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I [am] he: *before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.*”

Since even the Watchtower’s own version of the Bible acknowledges in Jn. 1:1 that Jesus is “a god,” Isa. 43:10 rules out the possibility that He is any other than *the* God.

- 2 Cor. 13:5 instructs those who profess to be Christians to
“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you*, except ye be reprobates?”

Witnesses have a problem with this verse. Since they do not claim that Jesus Christ lives in them, they must be reprobates! In order to avoid this conclusion, their *New World Translation* deliberately adds words so as to alter the verse to say “Jesus Christ in union with you” rather than “Jesus Christ in you” as the Greek text reads. (What in the world does “Christ in union with you” mean anyway? Does he have to obey your wishes?) But note that the passage does not say that any sort of “Christ spirit” is to be in us, but Jesus Christ personally. Only God could be in more than one place at a time. If

- Jesus can dwell in billions of believers at the same time, He has to be God.
- In Revelation 1:8 and 21:6 Jehovah identifies Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. In 22:12 He calls Himself Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first (Greek *protos*) and the last (*eschatos*). How many “firsts” can there be? Only one. How many “lasts”? Only one. Yet when Jesus identifies Himself in Rev. 1:18 as the First and the Last (*protos* and *eschatos*), Witnesses must say that there are two “firsts and lasts” - Jehovah and Jesus.
 - Witnesses must go through such mental gymnastics because they have a problem understanding how Jesus could be Jehovah. That would mean that Jehovah sent Jehovah to earth. However, Zechariah 2:8-11 says this is precisely what happened. Remember that every time we see “LORD” in all capital letters in the King James version, it means that the Hebrew text uses the name Jehovah. If we reinsert the name Jehovah in place of “LORD” in this passage, the meaning becomes plain as day.

8 For **thus saith Jehovah** of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that **Jehovah of hosts hath sent me**.

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, **saith Jehovah**.

11 And many nations shall be joined to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that **Jehovah of hosts hath sent me** unto thee.

Who is the speaker? Jehovah. Who sent Him? Jehovah. Though our human understanding cannot grasp how such a thing could be, the conclusion is inescapable: Jehovah sent Jehovah. Jesus and Jehovah are one.

In order to get around the obvious message that Jesus and the Father are one not just in purpose but also in being, the Watchtower’s *New World Translation* inserts strategically placed quotation marks to make it seem as if Zechariah is the one who was sent, not Jehovah. It practices similar insertions and distortions every time a passage indicates the deity of Christ. Why? Because the Bible disagrees with the Watchtower’s doctrine. In case of disagreement, the Bible loses.

iii. *The Trinity.*

Besides denying that Jesus and the Father are one in being, Witnesses also deny that the Holy Spirit is a person. Despite Jesus’ many references to the Holy Spirit as “He” rather than “it,” they believe that He is an impersonal force. Rather than “filled with the Holy Spirit,” their literature says “filled with holy spirit” -- in much the same way we might say a high school cheerleader is filled with school spirit. In order to maintain this doctrine the Watchtower must deliberately ignore many passages (Mt. 12:31-32, 28:19, Mk. 3:29, 12:36, 13:11 et al.) where Jesus used the definite article to refer to “*the* Holy Spirit,” not just “holy spirit.”

The organization uses a linguistic argument, gender, to justify making Him an “it.” In English we use gender for little except to distinguish between the masculine pronoun *he*, the feminine *she*, and the neuter *it*. However, the Greek language of the New Testament assigns a gender to every noun and pronoun. The Greek word for spirit, *pneuma*, is in the neuter gender. Therefore, the orga-

Visual
#2-31

nization says, the Holy Spirit must be an “it,” not a “he.”

This is makes the proverbial mountain out of a molehill. Many Greek words have a gender that doesn't make much sense. For instance, the feminine gender applies to such nouns as days, olive trees, snow, soldiers' tunics, a dry quart measure, and rocks; some of the many masculine nouns include years, spring rain, bone marrow, labor, barley, and gnats; and neuter nouns include olive oil, spirits, lilies, dogs, mint plants, snakes, fish, and so on.

In many cases, if a word could indicate either masculine or feminine, it was assigned to the neuter gender. Since the Greeks believed some spirits were masculine and others feminine, their language made the word *pneuma* neuter. Whether the individual spirit was masculine or feminine would be indicated by context.

In using the gender of the word alone to downgrade the Holy Spirit to an impersonal force, the Watchtower must overlook the Scriptural context. For instance, in John 14:13-14 Jesus twice refers to the Holy Spirit by the masculine pronoun *ekeinos* rather than the neuter form *ekeino*. His words indicate that He considered the Holy Spirit “he” rather than “it.” Besides, Jesus told us in John 16:13 that the Holy Spirit would speak whatever He hears. How can an impersonal force hear anything?

Witnesses accuse Christians who believe in the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) of worshipping three Gods. This is ridiculous. We believe in one Almighty God who has revealed Himself in three different ways. Besides, Witnesses believe in two *separate* Gods, Jehovah and Jesus.

iv. *Jesus' Death on the Cross.*

The Watchtower steadfastly maintains that Jesus died as a result of being impaled on a torture stake rather than being hung on a cross. Its use of the word “impale” is deceptive. Rather than use the most common meaning of the word, skewering, the organization uses a less common meaning, nailing to a single stake. Every single time the Bible refers to a cross, their *New World Translation* substitutes “torture stake;” every time the Scriptures refer to the crucifixion of Jesus, the *New World Translation* changes it to “impalement” instead. As justification, the organization says that the original meaning of the Greek word for “cross,” *stauros*, was a stake. So what? The meaning of a word can change radically. For instance, though the original meaning of “gay” was “happy,” the word has come to have a different meaning in our country. Likewise, by the time of Christ the word *stauros* could mean either a stake or a cross.

Any time a word can have more than one meaning -- e.g., a wrestler can pin his opponent or a seamstress can pin a dress -- the context determines the correct understanding. Let's look at the context in which the New Testament used the word *stauros*. There is ample historical and Biblical evidence that it was a cross, not a torture stake.

- First, historians tell us that the standard Roman method of execution was crucifixion on a cross, not nailing to a stake. Throughout the centuries, Christians and non-Christians alike agreed that this was how Jesus died. Even the Qur'an, written about 600 A.D., says He was crucified. Yet the Watchtower (not founded until the late 1800s) says everybody else has been wrong for almost 2000 years.
- Second, note that in John 19:31-33 the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to have the legs of Jesus and the others with Him broken so that they would die quickly. This in itself is sufficient to show that He was crucified, not impaled.

Visual
#2-32

Crucifixion was designed to bring about an agonizing death that might stretch out over days. The victim was suspended by his hands and feet with the arms extended and attached to the crossbeam (the *patibulum*). This posture compressed the rib cage and made it difficult to breathe. The subject could only do so by pushing up with his legs. In case the authorities wanted to speed up death for some reason, the soldiers would break his legs so he would quickly suffocate. Try this experiment. Stretch out your arms to the side as far as possible, slightly above head level, and try to breathe. It's very difficult. Now stretch your arms directly over your head as far as you can. Though it's not very comfortable, it's still easier to breathe that way.

One of the goals of crucifixion was to intimidate onlookers so that they would be too afraid to ever defy Rome. The Romans made sure the spectators knew how much the victims suffered. They deliberately maximized the agony by stretching the hands out to the side rather than ease the victim's suffering by stretching them overhead.

- Third, in John 20:25 Thomas demanded to see the print of the nails -- plural -- in Jesus' hands. The only reason more than one nail was needed is that His hands were stretched out on the cross. Only one nail would be required to fasten the hands together above the head.

Jesus confirmed the stretching out of the hands during crucifixion when He told of Peter's future execution:

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, *thou shalt stretch forth thy hands*, and another shall gird thee, and carry [thee] whither thou wouldst not." (Jn. 21:18)

- Fourth, in Matthew 27:37 we read explicitly that Pilate's inscription reading "The King of the Jews" was placed over Jesus' *head*. If he were nailed to a single stake, then His *hands* would have been the highest point on His body and the passage should read that the inscription was over his hands. It does not. He was crucified in the standard Roman manner.

Why is it so important to the leadership of the Watchtower to deny that Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, and insist that He was impaled on a torture stake instead? Perhaps it is because "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18).

This blatant butchering of the Word of God can come from no one else but Satan. He knows that his ultimate place is in the lake of fire, but he wants to take as many people with him as possible. The *New World Translation* is one of the ways he deceives the lost, by turning them away from the cross.

v. *Jesus' Bodily Resurrection.*

The Watchtower says that the body Jesus had after His resurrection was a new "spirit body." This is absurd. He still had the scars from His crucifixion, and He ate with His disciples to prove that He still had flesh and bones (Lk. 24:39). Besides, He had already said that He was going to raise up the same body (Jn. 2:19-21), not a different one. Was He telling the truth or not?

Witnesses should think carefully about denying that Jesus came back in the flesh, for John writes

"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." (1 John 4:3)

John identifies one of their main doctrines as the spirit of antichrist!

Visual
#2-33

vi. *An Eternal Hell.*

The Watchtower says that there is no hell. Evildoers (even Hitler), as well as Witnesses who have not done enough good works, will simply cease to exist at the end of their earthly life. Those who die before the Battle of Armageddon but merit eternal life will cease to exist until Jehovah recreates them with their personalities and memories intact.

What does the Bible say? Jesus preached more on hell than anyone else. Even Witnesses admit that He created everything. He must have known what He was talking about, since He made it. Hell is a real place.

Do we cease to exist when our bodies die? The Bible says that for believers, at least, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8).

Whether or not we are conscious until Jesus returns to earth, Acts 24:15 and John 5:28 - 29 tell us that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous, the former into eternal life and the latter into judgment. .

“Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, and those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28-29, New World Translation)

Even in the Watchtower’s own translation, Rev. 14:9-11 says that for those who receive the mark of the beast,

“the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever, and day and night they have no rest” (*New World Translation*).

The Bible makes it plain that those who receive the mark of the beast will not quickly go out of existence, but instead be tormented forever. Are they the only ones who will suffer eternal punishment, or could it be that many other sinners will experience the same thing after they are resurrected to judgment?

vii. *The Unavailability of Heaven to Most Believers.*

The Watchtower says that only 144,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses were eligible to go to heaven and live with Jehovah forever.

- The number comes from Rev. 7:5-8, which says that 144,000 from the tribes of Israel were to be sealed on their foreheads. Witnesses apply this number to their organization (which has nothing to do with the twelve tribes of Israel).
- The number 144,000 also occurs in Rev. 14:1-4, where we read that all in that number are virgins. This rules out the ancestors of today’s Jehovah’s Witnesses who lived in the past. Virgins do not become anybody’s ancestor!

The organization teaches that just about all of the 144,000 have already died and gone to heaven. Thus, the best a Jehovah’s Witness can hope for is to live forever in an earthly paradise.

To support the idea that throughout eternity there will be two distinct classes of Christians, those in heaven and those on earth, Witnesses cite the first part of John 10:16:

“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.”

They fail to read the rest of the verse. Jesus continues,

“... them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, [and] one shepherd.”

He was making the point that at that time not all of His followers were yet united, but we will be some day. When that happens,

“we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:17)

Visual
#2-34

Visual
#2-35

viii. *Extra Rules of the Watchtower.*

The reason Jehovah's Witnesses deny so many Biblical doctrines is that their Bible study is always subject to the interpretation of the Watchtower. They seldom, if ever, study the Bible by itself without the aid of Watchtower materials, because they are told that they can only properly understand it under the Watchtower's guidance. The organization claims that its publications (*Watchtower*, *Awake!*, the for-members-only bulletin *Kingdom Ministry*, and its many books) are written under the direct inspiration of Jehovah. Members are thus under constant pressure to conform to its teachings.

Witnesses are prohibited from participating in birthday parties, holiday celebrations, military service, or politics. All these are viewed as "creature worship," which is strictly forbidden. Consequently, they refuse to salute the flag or recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

They also go far beyond the Biblical commandment not to eat or drink blood, refusing to receive blood transfusions even at the cost of their lives or their children's. (Even their pet dogs -- which by nature eat blood -- are not allowed to receive transfusions.) Members are forbidden to store up even their own blood in advance for use during surgery, yet they are allowed to be hooked up to machines that process blood for immediate recirculation to their bodies, (*Awake!*, Dec. 8, 1998, pp. 19-20). What's the difference? In either case blood is taken into the body, whether it's fresh or stored.

Almost all Christian churches participate in some form of communion or "Lord's Supper." Jehovah's Witnesses, too, have an annual "Memorial Service" around the time of the Passover. However, the only ones allowed to actually partake of the bread and cup are the 144,000 -- practically all of whom are dead. Thus, Witnesses can watch the service but cannot partake.

b. *Source of Watchtower Doctrines.*

The Watchtower is probably the most prolific religious publishing center in the world, printing millions of copies per month of the magazines *Awake* and *The Watchtower* as well as the house organ *Kingdom Ministry* and several books each year. But just who at "Bethel," the Watchtower's headquarters, decides the doctrines that go into these publications? To understand this we need to know a little about the history of the organization. (Much of the following is from a pamphlet by Wesley P. Walters and M. Kurt Goedelmann entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses*, available from Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515.)

In the 1800s many people began to expect the imminent return of Jesus Christ. One of the leaders of this "Second Adventist" movement was William Miller, who first predicted that Christ would return in 1843. He later changed the date to 1844, then quit setting dates. However, others continued to do so. Among their number was N.H. Barbour, who held the view that Christ had returned invisibly in 1874 and would set up His visible kingdom in 1914.

i. *Charles Taze Russell.*

While still a young man, Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) was impressed with Miller's and Barbour's teaching because they agreed with his belief that there was no hell. Russell collaborated with Barbour on the book *Three Worlds and the Harvest of This World* in 1877. When he realized that he had some theological differences with Barbour he set out on his own. In 1879 he used the income from his clothing business to begin publishing *Zion's Watch Tower*. In 1884 he incorporated his group as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Though he had no formal theological training, Russell was the final authority on doctrine throughout his lifetime tenure as president of the Society. He was very im-

Visual
#2-38

pressed with his own ability. He wrote six of the seven volumes of *The Studies in the Scriptures* and said that **unless one studied this series**, the Bible was **insufficient** to show him or her the will of God. In his words,

“... not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the Scripture Studies aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years -- if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood the Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the Scripture Studies with their references and had not read a page of the Bible as such, he would be in the light at the end of two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.” (*The Watch Tower*, Sept. 15, 1910, p. 298)

We should feel sorry for the millions of Christians who lived in the centuries before Russell was born to teach them. Poor things, they must have all “gone into darkness” without his wisdom.

Russell based his claim to authority on a parable Jesus told concerning His second coming:

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” (Mt. 24:44-46)

At first Russell said that the “servant” consisted of all the faithful Watchtower members. In 1896, however, his wife suggested that since “servant” is singular, it must refer to one man -- him. From that point until his death in 1916 Russell contended that he himself was the faithful and wise servant, and that this passage was a prophecy about him rather than a parable.

ii. *“Judge” Joseph Rutherford.*

Russell died in 1916. Shortly afterward, “Judge” Joseph F. Rutherford, the Society’s legal counsel at the time of Russell’s death, came to power. (He called himself “Judge” because he was appointed a special judge in Cooper County, Missouri, for four days in 1897 when the regular judge became ill.) He, too, was the sole arbiter of doctrine during his lifetime tenure as president. It was Rutherford who in 1931 bestowed the name “Jehovah’s Witnesses” on the organization. He also instituted the familiar door-to-door visitation program.

No Watchtower president since Rutherford has exercised absolute doctrinal control the way he did. All since have relied on a group of advisers known as the “Faithful and Wise Servant Class,” the “Faithful and Discreet Slave Class,” or simply “the Governing Body” to help set doctrines. The membership of this group is subject to change and is usually kept hidden from outsiders.

iii. *Nathan Knorr.*

After Rutherford died in 1942, Nathan H. Knorr took over as the third president. He was an excellent administrator, establishing businesslike procedures in the organization and setting up training schools for Witnesses. Under his leadership the Society grew to two million members before his death in 1977.

One of the most noteworthy achievements of Knorr’s administration was the publication in 1961 of the Watchtower’s own version of the Bible, the *New World Translation* referred to previously. The work of “translating” was credited to five men: Knorr, Frederick Franz (vice-president of the Society at the time), Albert Schroeder, Milton Henschel, and George Gangas. This version of

Visual
#2-39

the Bible is the principal support for many of the Watchtower's doctrines, differing greatly from any other in its treatment of Jesus. (See Appendix C for examples of mistranslations.) For instance, John 1:1 in any other translation says, "and the Word was God." In the New World Bible it becomes "and the Word was a god." The emphasis throughout the Watchtower's Bible is to deny that Jesus Christ is one with Jehovah, or God the Father.

What credentials did the translators have? Of the five, only Franz had studied Greek. None had ever taken a course in Hebrew. Franz claimed to be an expert in both languages but lied under oath about his ability in a 1954 trial in Scotland. He claimed a working knowledge of Hebrew but was unable to translate even one verse, Genesis 2:4, into that language.

iv. *Frederick Franz.*

After Knorr's death in 1977, Franz took over as president. He served in that capacity until his death in 1993.

v. *Milton Henschel and Don Adams. (From the Internet site <http://cftf.com/2000octEXTRA.htm>)*

Milton Henschel, one of the "translators," served as President from Franz's death until 2000. At that time, the organization underwent a major restructuring. For the first time its Board of Directors, which supervises operations, was separated from its secretive thirteen member Governing Body, which sets doctrine. Henschel remains a member of the Governing Body, but turned the presidency over to Don Adams.

The change was necessary for two reasons.

- First, the membership of the Governing Body has long been restricted to members who became Witnesses before 1935. However, because Jesus has not returned as they expected, many of them have died. In order to maintain the size of the Governing Body, the Watchtower has had to make repeated exceptions to this policy. Since it was on the verge of having a majority of doctrine setters who did not fit the policy, it finally had to rescind it.
- Second, the reorganization was done to limit legal liability. For instance, suppose someone were to sue the Watchtower if a loved one died because they were not allowed a blood transfusion. In order to minimize the possible financial damage, the Watchtower now includes a number of incorporated bodies, each of which has only limited liability. The Boards of Directors are now separate from the Governing Body.

c. ***False Prophecies of the Watchtower.***

The Watchtower is neither the first, last, largest, smallest, nor only organization ever to claim to be God's sole representative on earth. How can we know if it is telling the truth? By examining what it says. Whether headed by one man or by a committee, the Watchtower has made many specific prophecies since Russell established it. Not one has come to pass. (Some of the following examples are found in William and Joan Cetnar's *Questions for Jehovah's Witnesses*. The book includes photocopies of the original Watchtower documents.)

i. *Return of Christ in 1874/ 1914.*

Russell said that Jesus would return to earth in 1873, then 1874. When 1874 passed, he changed the date of Christ's visible return to 1914 (*The Time is At Hand*, 1908 edition, p. 101) and said that He had come back in 1874, but invisibly (*Watchtower*, Feb. 1881, p.3). Then, when the Battle of Armageddon and the return of Jesus did not occur in 1914, he said that Jesus had come back invisibly in *that* year instead and was in control of the Watchtower.

When confronted with this false prophecy, Witnesses say that Christ's in-

Visual
#2-40

fluence began to be felt in the year He returned invisibly. (You might ask them which year, 1874 or 1914?) This doctrine of an invisible return contradicts a number of clear statements in the Bible. To begin with, why would Jesus need to return spiritually? He told us in Mt. 28:20 that He would be with us always, until the end of the age. In Mt. 18:20 He said that if two or three gathered in His name He would be there in the midst. He doesn't need to return spiritually because He never left!

The Bible's teaching about Jesus' Second Coming deals with his physical, not spiritual, return. And what did He say about those who would say His coming was to be secret?

"Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: Behold, in the secret chambers; *believe not*" (Mt. 24:26).

His return will not be secret. Every eye shall see Him (Rev. 1:7).

ii. *The Faithful and Wise Servant.*

From 1896 until 1927 the Society, first under Russell's direction and then under Rutherford's, claimed that Russell was the "faithful and wise servant" of Mt. 24:42-47. Many issues of the *Watchtower* (12/1/1916, 12/15/1916, 5/1/1922, 5/31/1922, 12/15/1922, et al.) said that it was a necessity of faith to believe this.

In 1927, a few years after Russell's death, things changed. The Society now said that its members as a whole were the "faithful and wise servant" and that those who regarded Russell as the servant were guilty of "creature worship," a repulsive act in Jehovah's sight. This places Witnesses to make a difficult choice:

- If the Society was correct in regarding Russell for thirty-one years as "that servant," then by changing it has rejected Jehovah's messenger and His message.
- If the Society was wrong in accepting him as the servant for all those years, then it is guilty of having promoted creature worship for over three decades!

Either way, the *Watchtower* has shown that it cannot be relied upon. Its repeated false prophecies (any Christian bookstore can furnish several volumes documenting more) plus this glaring self-contradiction show that the *Watchtower* is a false prophet. It cannot be trusted when it claims to speak for Jehovah.

iii. *Return of Old Testament Patriarchs.*

Russell died in 1916. Rutherford succeeded him three years later. In 1920 he predicted the imminent return of many Old Testament patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in 1925 (*Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, 1920, pp. 88-89). He had the Society build a home for them, "Beth Sarim" in San Diego. As of 2015, the tenants have not taken possession.

iv. *Beginning of the Millennium in 1975.*

While vice-president of the Society in 1966, Franz wrote a book entitled *Life Everlasting in the Freedom of the Sons of God*. On page 29 he predicted that

"the seventh period of a thousand years of human history will begin in the fall of 1975 CE" (Christian Era).

Many Witnesses sold their homes in order to go into full-time "pioneer service" in anticipation of a 1975 Armageddon, a practice encouraged by the Society (*Kingdom Ministry*, May, 1974, p. 3). It didn't happen.

When confronted with this false prophecy by a man who would a few years later be elevated to the presidency of the organization, Witnesses claim that the prophecy didn't specifically say that anything would visibly change. They say that many were wrong in assuming it meant that Armageddon would occur in

that year, but that the seventh period did indeed begin in 1975. According to Jehovah's Witness elders interviewed by the author, the reason no one could tell that the prophecy had come true is that the seventh period is no different than the first six. An interesting way to deal with a false prophecy -- say that it came true, but nobody could tell!

It is obvious to anyone but a Jehovah's Witness that the Watchtower does not speak for God. A Witness who comes to your door believes that he cannot possibly get to heaven, but if he does enough good works (obeying the Watchtower without question, selling books and magazines, reporting weekly how he spent his time, etc.), he will be able to live forever on earth. Even if he is right, he can never know if his works are sufficient. If they are not, he will be no better or worse off than the worst criminals in history. Like them, he will simply go out of existence.

What if you are wrong and he is right? You will cease to exist at the end of your earthly life and it won't matter anyway. What if you are right and he is wrong? You will go to heaven to be with God, but he will go to an everlasting hell. You certainly should not wish him well on his mission of deception, but instead of turning him away, the best thing you can do is to witness to the Witness who comes to your door about the love, grace, and forgiveness available through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Many books available in Christian bookstores can tell you how to go about this labor of love.

4. THE BIBLE, JUDAISM, AND CHRISTIANITY.

This book is dedicated to the proposition that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be, the Word of God. We will postpone our examination of evidence which supports that claim until after we finish this quick scan of world religions. Let's briefly consider the two major religions based on the Bible, as well as the Bible's concept of God.

a. Judaism.

There are three major divisions of Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, as well as the less-recognized ranks of Messianic Jews.

i. Orthodox.

Orthodox Jews still attempt to follow the Law of Moses found in the Bible and still look for the Messiah. They dress in the traditional way, conduct services in Hebrew, follow kosher dietary laws, etc. (Included in this group are the ultra-Orthodox Hasidic Jews.)

ii. Reform.

Reform Jews have largely abandoned the traditional Old Testament practices. While they still meet in a synagogue, their worship is conducted in the language of the land in which they live. Few expect a Messiah. Though several reform groups have recently taken steps to move back toward traditional Jewish worship, in general, Reform Judaism is more cultural than religious.

iii. Conservative.

Conservative Jews are somewhere in the middle. They follow some but not all of the traditional practices. They still conduct their worship services in Hebrew, and most still await the coming of the Messiah.

iv. Messianic.

Many Jews have accepted Y'shua (the name of Jesus in Hebrew) as Messiah. Becoming a Christian doesn't make you stop being Jewish, any more than it makes you stop from being English, Nigerian, or any other ethnic background. The Jewish Bible or *Tanakh* contains exactly the same material as the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, though some chapters, verses, and the order of several books are arranged differently. Many Jews also follow traditions found in Biblical commentaries known as *Talmudim* and *Midrashim*.

Visual
#2-41

- The two Talmuds, Babylonian and Palestinian, were written some time in the third or fourth centuries A.D. and include not only the written Law of Moses or Torah (the first five books of the Bible), but also the traditional oral rabbinic law (*Mishnah*), and many traditions and commentaries (*Gemara*).
- Midrash is a general name for a number of Jewish writings spread out from several centuries before Christ to several centuries after. Some of these are commentaries on legal matters of the Bible, while others are intended as an inspirational source for preaching purposes.

b. Christianity.

There are many Christian denominations in the world, but all have certain key beliefs in common.

i. Jesus' Bodily Resurrection.

Christianity is not just a system of ethics. It depends entirely upon the truth of Jesus' resurrection. If He did not rise bodily from the dead, then Christianity is just another man-made religion.

ii. The Trinity.

There is one God, the God of the Bible. He is the Creator of all things. Almost all Christians believe that He has revealed Himself in three persons (the Trinity): Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

iii. Deity of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is not a created being, but is the manifestation of God in human flesh. He is both true God and true man. His bodily conception took place by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was born of the Virgin Mary.

iv. Original Sin.

All humans are sinners in need of a savior. We inherited a sin nature from our first parents, whom the Bible calls Adam and Eve.

v. Salvation.

Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried in payment for our sins. He rose from the dead on the third day. He ascended into heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Forgiveness of sins comes only through repentance and faith in Him. He is the only way to come to the Father.

Down through the centuries the largest denomination of professing Christianity, Roman Catholicism, developed a tradition of salvation by works. Many Catholics still believe that by going to Mass, receiving the sacraments, saying enough rosaries, etc., they can earn their way out of Purgatory and achieve salvation. However, somewhere in the hundreds of volumes of written Catholic tradition there are also statements in support of the orthodox Christian belief of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Catholics must choose between two opposing elements of "Sacred Tradition": salvation by works, which contradicts the Bible, or salvation by faith, which agrees with it.

vi. The Second Coming.

Jesus is one day coming back to earth in visible, bodily form to judge the living and the dead. At His coming, the dead will be raised: some to judgment, others to an eternal reward. He will establish an everlasting kingdom.

vii. The Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. He is the third Person of the Trinity, who dwells in those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

viii. The Bible.

The Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the revealed Word of Almighty God.

Visual
#2-42

Christianity is solidly rooted in Judaism. Christians believe that all the Old Testament promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who was a Jew according to the flesh. There is no room for hatred of anyone, especially the Jewish people, in our faith.

c. *The Character of God in the Bible.*

We see a different emphasis regarding the character of God in the Old and New Testaments.

i. Old Testament.

The Old Testament focuses mostly on law with a lesser emphasis on grace. Examples of grace: God's sparing the life of Cain after he killed Abel, and His forgiveness of David after his sin with Bathsheba.

ii. New Testament.

The New Testament presents mostly grace with less emphasis on law. Examples of law: the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, and Paul's striking Elymas blind in Acts 13.

Despite the different emphases, there is no contradiction. From beginning to end the Bible portrays God as a God of justice toward those who oppose Him and mercy toward those who love Him. Because of His holy and just character, He demands that sin be judged and punished. Because of His love He promised and sent a Savior, His Son, to satisfy the demands of justice by dying in payment for our sins. Those who reject the sacrifice of Jesus Christ are condemned by their own choice to spend eternity in a place of torment prepared for the devil and his angels.

God wants to be so intimately involved in our lives that He even knows how many hairs we have on our heads. He gives meaning and purpose to our lives, as well as glorious hope for the future. All of us sin, but God offers us forgiveness and restoration with no further requirements beyond repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

True Biblical Christianity benefits not only the individual but also the world around him. The Bible elevates women to spiritual equality with men. It commands us to help the poor and the needy, to respect the lives and property of others, and to do good to all men. Is it any wonder that almost all the world's disaster relief organizations have Judeo-Christian roots?

Let's consider two more sources of "divine revelation" used by many who profess to be Christians.

5. "SACRED TRADITION" OF ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

The Catholic Church claims to have assembled the Bible, and thus claims that its "Sacred Tradition" is responsible for and superior to the Bible. We will see in the next chapter that this is false.

- The contents of the Old Testament were almost unanimously agreed upon by Jews and Christians by the end of the first century A.D.
- The early Christians had already decided which New Testament books were worth dying for by the year 303 A.D., almost a century before the developing Catholic Church added its stamp of approval at the Councils of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397).

The "Sacred Tradition" of the Roman Catholic church is supposed to be infallible, but it keeps contradicting itself. A personal example: the author was raised Roman Catholic but did not become a born-again Christian until 1980. I then sought to be baptized but discovered that the church forbade me to do so, since I had gone through the Catholic rite of baptism as an infant. Sacred Tradition said that for me to be rebaptized as an adult was a formal heresy known as *Anabaptism*. To follow such a heresy, Tradition said, was a mortal sin ("subject to the eternal punishments and death of hell") which would result in automatic excommunication (*The New American Bible*, Catholic

Visual
#2-43

Visual
#2-44

Heirloom Edition 1971-1972, Encyclopedic Dictionary section, pp. 11, 93, 158). Yet a few years later the Catholic Church reversed its centuries-old Sacred Tradition and declared that anabaptism was no longer a formal heresy. So now I'm not condemned to hell. It's a good thing I didn't die before the Catholic Church changed its mind!

Sacred Tradition has changed many times. It used to be a mortal sin to eat meat on Fridays (except in Spain), then it wasn't; it used to be a mortal sin to miss Mass on Sunday, then it wasn't; girls couldn't be altar servers at Mass, then they could, etc.

Other changes in "Sacred Tradition" are far more serious. (See Dave Hunt, *A Woman Rides The Beast*, Chapters 8 and 9 and Appendix D.)

- On several occasions during the Middle Ages more than one man claimed to be the legitimate pope. Sometimes one of them was eventually recognized and the others excommunicated as "antipopes," but at least once all of them were thrown out.
- A number of popes and Councils through the centuries excommunicated earlier popes after their death and declared them heretics. So much for an unbroken line of apostolic succession!
- These excommunications invalidated all the ordinations the heretical popes performed. Since there is no way to know which priests and bishops trace their ordination to which popes, no modern priest or bishop can be sure that his ordination is legitimate.
- Over the centuries Catholic Inquisitions tortured and killed over three million "heretics" for their belief that the Bible was sufficient as the final guide in all spiritual matters. (Ever wonder where the expression "Holy Toledo" came from? The Spanish Inquisition was headquartered in Toledo, Spain, which was thus considered a holy city.)

The church continues to maintain that its non-Biblical doctrines of Purgatory, indulgences, transubstantiation, the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven, and the like are infallibly true. It has yet to rescind more than 100 *anathemas* (curses) pronounced against Protestants by its councils through the centuries. Yet now the church says it was all a misunderstanding and that Protestants are welcome back into the fold.

"Sacred Tradition" is sacred only if God keeps changing His mind.

6. BIBLE COMMENTARIES AND FOOTNOTES.

Without realizing it, many Bible-believing Christians have what they consider a second source of revelation - the footnotes in their reference Bibles. Many accept Dake's and Scofield's notes with almost as much reverence as they do the Scripture text itself. Thus, several doctrines almost unheard of until the 1800s have practically become articles of faith in some churches.

One such doctrine important to the study of Creation and Evolution is the "Gap Theory," which says that there was a pre-Adamic creation destroyed in a flood caused by Lucifer's rebellion against God. This is supposed to have taken place during a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 lasting millions of years. We'll look at this belief in more detail later, but we should note that it is not an obvious Biblical doctrine. While the idea of an old earth dates back to ancient Greek philosophers, the Gap Theory became popular only as a response to the rise of evolutionary thought. As we will see, the it is very weak both scientifically and scripturally. (See Appendix A for scriptural arguments.)

Bible commentaries can be very useful, but they should never be allowed to take the place of the Scripture text itself.

D. NON-REVELATION RELIGIONS' "HOLY BOOKS" AND CONCEPTS OF GOD.

Besides the religions we've discussed, many others in the world are based on "Holy Books" which do not claim to be revealed wisdom from a personal, almighty God. Instead, these books reflect the wisdom of either a single leader or of a group of "ascended masters"

such as Buddha, Confucius, Nanak (founder of the Sikh religion), Zoroaster (founder of Parseeism), and the like. We can group these under the heading of Non-Revelation religions. The lack of revelation by itself does not automatically prove that they are false, but there is no way to be sure if they are true.

Almost every such religion has no problem believing in evolution. Logically, then, the ascended masters, like all humans, are nothing but highly evolved apes. Their wisdom must be highly evolved ape wisdom. This means that even if it is true, there is no way to ever be sure. We can never be sure of anything.

Non-Revelation religions may or may not be based on belief in a personal God. They include:

1. **ATHEISM (Secular Humanism).**

If atheists have a single “holy book” on which they base their lives, it would probably be Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. There is no God, only Random Chance. While we who believe in a Creator sing,

“All hail the power of Jesus’ Name”

as we worship a God who loves us and gave His own Son for us, atheists have a substitute. They have to sing,

“All Hail the power of Random Chance, Let atoms prostrate fall.

You’re nothing but an accident, you count for nothing at all.

You’re nothing but an accident, you count for nothing at all.”

as they worship their impersonal, uncaring god Random Chance.

An atheist’s belief that humans are nothing but evolutionary accidents means there is no reason for them to have any intrinsic rights. One need only look at the history of countries such as Red China and the former Soviet Union in the last seventy years to see how cheap human life is under an atheistic government.

The atheist has no hope that his own life will ultimately count for anything. He may try to leave a legacy for future generations by living a good and moral life, but even this is futile. Eventually the sun and stars will burn out, leaving the universe barren and lifeless. All the atheist’s good deeds will have been for nothing. His life will have had no meaning or purpose.

2. **HINDUISM.**

There are at least a billion Hindus in the world. However, there is no central authority to say what they should believe (no Hindu pope), so there may be some Hindus who do not believe all of the following.

- One of the common beliefs is known as *pantheism* or *monism*. This is the idea that God is the sum total of everything in the universe. Thus, everything is a part of God. Humans, rats, cows, and dirt are all on the same level. This leads to a philosophical contradiction: if everything is God, then how can we say anything is evil? After all, everything is of one essence. How can part of God be evil?
- Though Hindus have various names for their gods, they do not believe in one all-powerful God the same way Christians, Jews, and Muslims do. Instead, they believe in millions of gods. (Christians believe these are demons.) Two of the gods, Vishnu and Shiva, are at the highest level with the goddess Kali not far below them. Vishnu is often regarded as the most important (see next paragraph). He has revealed himself through eight incarnations or *avatars*, who have entered the world when there is disorder. Two of the best-known avatars are Krishna and Rama.
- The reason our universe and each of us exists is that we are all part of a dream Vishnu is having. That is, we are dreams who think we are persons, but we really do not exist. We are figments of his imagination. Our dreams are dreams within Vishnu’s dream and the universe in which we live is merely an illusion within his mind. Each of us creates our own reality, but our reality is an illusion within our

Visual
#2-46

minds, which are in turn illusions within his mind.

- Vishnu's dream of the universe flows along without any particular sequence or plan. He is not interested in having a relationship with figments of his imagination, so our lives are guided by nothing but the impersonal flow of his dreams. Thus, when you discuss "God" with a Hindu, he is referring to an impersonal force. Anyone who has seen the "Star Wars" movies remembers "the force," an impersonal entity each person can use for either good or evil. This is nothing but recycled Hinduism.
- The ultimate goal of a true believer in Hinduism is to leave the illusion of personhood behind and achieve *nirvana*, merging into the impersonal essence, or Brahman-atman, of the universe.
- Since an impersonal force cannot reveal anything, it is impossible for the Hindu religion to claim divine revelation. Their scriptures, the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, claim nothing more than to be the wisdom of the Ascended Masters accumulated through the centuries.
- Hindus believe in *transmigration* -- that living beings are born, live, die, are reborn in a different form, live, die, are reborn, etc., a potentially unlimited number of times. Unlike the popular Western concept of reincarnation, the Hindu concept of transmigration does not guarantee that you will come back as a human in your next life. You are fortunate if you come back as a cow, because cows are regarded as especially sacred. However, even an insect may have been a human in a previous life, or vice versa. You could come back as a bug in the next life.
- An important part of Hinduism is belief in *karma*: the good or bad you did in a previous life will affect who or what you are in your next life. Somehow, the impersonal essence of the universe keeps track of your actions and places you into the correct circumstances for your next incarnation. But how could an impersonal force keep track of anything, let alone where to place the reincarnated souls? And since you are nothing more than one of Vishnu's dreams, is it fair for him to punish you for being what he dreamed you to be?
- The concept of karma forces Hindus into a moral dilemma. They should do good deeds for others in order to have better karma for the next life, but the reason others suffer is because of bad karma from a previous life. By helping those who are suffering, a Hindu interferes with their karma and is actually doing harm rather than good.
- There is no such thing as forgiveness in Hinduism. Supposed you murdered someone. In order for your karma to work out properly, you would need to be murdered yourself in the next life. But that means that someone else would have to become a murderer in order to kill you. In his next life he would have to be murdered, requiring that someone else became a murderer, and so on.
- Belief in transmigration and karma has led to the *caste* system, ranging from the Brahmin caste at the top to the untouchables at the bottom. You cannot do anything to earn a higher status; your caste depends on how good you were in the previous life. The consequences of Hindu beliefs are obvious in India. The nation produces more than enough grain to feed its entire population, yet millions are starving. Why? Because Hindus not only refuse to kill and eat cows but also won't kill rats. Some estimate that these eat between a third and a half of India's grain production each year. The Hindu religion is saving cows and rats but starving humans.

With such a bleak prospect of endless reincarnations and bad karma, is it any wonder that a Hindu's highest hope is to eventually reach nirvana and simply go out of existence?

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3. **BUDDHISM.**

Buddhism began about 600 B.C. as an offshoot of Hinduism. A wealthy young Hindu named Siddhartha Gautama, who came to be known as the “Buddha” (“enlightened one”), was troubled by the caste system and the misery he saw outside his palace. He left on a six-year quest to solve the riddle of life. After he came up with his answer, he spent the rest of his life traveling and teaching it to others.

a. **The Four Noble Truths.**

Buddha decided that there were “Four Noble Truths”: (1) Suffering is universal. (2) The cause of suffering is selfish desire. (3) The cure is to rid oneself of cravings. (4) The method is to follow the “Noble Eightfold Path.”

b. **The Eightfold Path.**

The steps of the “Eightfold Path” are: (1) Right knowledge. (2) Right intention. (3) Right speech. (4) Right conduct. (5) Right means of livelihood. (6) Right effort. (7) Right mindfulness. (8) Right concentration.

Here’s the problem: Buddhism, like Hinduism, denies the existence of absolute truth and says that God is everything and everything is God. If there is no such thing as truth, how can there be eight noble “truths”? If everything is part of God, how can Buddhists say that some things are right and others wrong?

Like Hindus, Buddhists believe in karma and reincarnation. They, too seek to reach nirvana through spiritual enlightenment. However, the two religions go different directions in this pursuit. Hindus seek help from millions of gods to achieve enlightenment, but Buddhists believe they have to do it all on their own with no gods to help them. Their religion is thus much more turned inward to the individual and only requires that they be involved with others when such involvement leads to higher wisdom. They are supposed to continually purify themselves by forcing out all their bad thoughts and desires. Their religious practices consist largely of meditation and self-discipline.

Buddhism also has its “holy books” such as the *Dhammapada* and *Suttanipata*. Like Hinduism, it does not have many formally defined doctrines. Since each person ultimately creates his own reality, what he chooses to believe is largely up to him. This leads to some interesting consequences.

- Though Buddha was an atheist, many pray to him as a god.
- Hindus and Buddhists believe that everything is a part of God, but the former worship idols representing millions of gods. In their attempt to achieve oneness with an impersonal force, they rely on the guidance of millions of personal spirits who have not achieved that oneness themselves.

It is enlightening to hear former Hindu gurus tell of their experiences during yoga and Transcendental Meditation. The things they saw and felt and the spirits they encountered while in a trancelike state are very similar to the experiences of those who take hallucinogenic drugs. (See *The Cult Explosion* by Dave Hunt.) The Bible word for sorcery is the Greek word *pharmakeia*, from which we get “pharmacy.” Little do drug users realize the world of sorcery and demonic possession they are getting themselves into.

- Though Hindus and Buddhists believe they should do good deeds, there are no Hindu or Buddhist disaster relief organizations. All such groups in Hindu or Buddhist countries are Christian in origin.

4. **THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT.**

The “New Age” movement is nothing but a collection of Hindu and Buddhist beliefs modified to be more palatable to the Western mind. Reincarnation is a standard New Age belief, but the bad parts are eliminated. You don’t have to worry about coming back as a bug; you will be a good person. (It’s amazing how many New Age believers were Napoleon in a previous life. He must have had a terrible problem with multiple personalities.)

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Since God is everything and everything is God, you are God! Each person gets to set his own standards of right and wrong.

5. **SPIRITISM. (Satanism, Voodoo, Santeria, channeling, etc.)**

Those who attempt to contact spirits leave themselves wide open to deception. They have no way of knowing if the spirit is real or imagined, good or evil, truthful or deceptive. (The Bible, of course, forbids our trying to contact spirits or the dead. Spirits do exist, but those that would come as we conjure them up are not sent by God.)

Religions based on spiritism depend on what people expect to hear from spirits, and on what they do hear or think they hear from them. Many cultures find themselves in a constant struggle to appease the spirits by offering sacrifices, injuring themselves, etc. Even then, they can never be sure they have done enough to keep the spirits from getting angry again the next day.

This is by no means a complete list of world religions and cults. The new ones springing up around our country - Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, Krishna Consciousness, etc., all follow a pattern. You can reach "higher consciousness" if you empty your mind through whatever technique that religion uses and open yourself up to the enlightened spirits. As Christians we believe that the spirits are demons.

There are many other pseudo-Christian cults besides those dealt with in this book. It seems that every few years someone comes along and says that everybody else has it all wrong, and that only they have the truth.

- Masons claim that their organization dates back to the Tower of Babel and Solomon's temple. They base this on the fact that stonemasons built those structures. However, Freemasons are not real stonemasons ("operative masons" in their terminology) but instead call themselves "speculative masons" because they use the tools of masonry only as symbols. The earliest record of their organization's existence is 1717, when the Institution of Speculative Masonry was established (see Jack Harris, *Freemasonry: The Invisible Cult in Our Midst*, 1983, Daniels Pub. Co., 1209 29th St., Orlando, FL 32802).

Masonry, too, has its "holy books." One of these is *Morals and Dogma* by Albert Pike, made available only to Masons who reach the highest levels of the Scottish Rite. This book is openly occultic and pagan. It identifies Lucifer as the god of goodness and light and "Adonay," the Christian god, as the ruler of evil and darkness. One has to wonder if the Masons who profess to be Christians have ever bothered to read the book. How can they not see the blasphemy they've pledged themselves to?

Even within the branches of Masonry that are not so obviously hostile to Christianity (e.g., the Knights Templar), good standing within the Lodge depends upon an elaborate system of rituals that has nothing to do with faith in Jesus Christ. Masonry places Christianity on the same level as Islam, Hinduism, and all the rest of the religions in the world. It claims that none of them is completely right, and that only it has the truth -- the same thing so many other cults have said.

- In the 1820s Joseph Smith claimed that only he had the truth and started the Mormon religion.
- In 1879 Mary Baker Eddy claimed that only she had the truth and started Christian Science.
- In 1880 Charles Taze Russell claimed that only he had the truth and started the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.
- In the 1930s Sun Myung Moon claimed that only he had the truth and started the Unification Church (the "Moonies"). He says that Jesus failed in his mission because he never married and had children. Thus, Reverend Moon became the new Messiah or "Lord of the Second Advent." However, he died in 2012 without bringing in a new world order. Guess he wasn't the Messiah after all.
- In 1934 Herbert W. Armstrong claimed that only he had the truth and started the Worldwide Church of God.

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- In 1942 Victor Paul Wierwille claimed that only he had the truth and started The Way International.
- Jim Jones claimed that only he had the truth and started the People's Temple. This group ended in 1978 in the mass suicide and murder of over 900 people in Guyana.
- David Koresh claimed that only he had the truth and started the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas. It ended in disaster in April of 1993.
- Before the Heaven's Gate cult committed suicide in 1997 hoping to be picked up by a UFO trailing the Hale-Bopp comet, it claimed that only it had the truth.

These are not the only pseudo-Christian cults in existence, but they illustrate the pattern well. Every so often someone comes along and claims to have a new revelation from God which no one else has. They deny the deity of Jesus Christ and either minimize the Bible's importance or discard it entirely. Once the cult leader has persuaded a few people that he or she is the only source of divine revelation it is not hard to establish a hard-core group of followers who then proselytize others. Unfortunately, it seems especially true of many young people that unless they stand for something, they'll fall for anything.

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Does it really matter what we believe? It most certainly does. The rapid growth of cults and world religions shows us that unless we have the Word of God as an absolute reference point to judge between truth and error, we have no way to know if we are being misled by persuasive speech or dynamic personalities. We need to know, and to be able to teach others, that the Word of God is absolutely true and accurate in every detail.

We've looked at all the other "holy books" of the world and eliminated them from consideration as God's Word. In the next chapter we'll see that the Bible passes every test with flying colors.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

- I. It matters what you believe.
 - A. We can only know about God the things He chooses to reveal to us.
 - B. Each world religion's "holy book" presents a different picture of God. If any one of these is true, all the rest are false.
 - C. An all-powerful God has the power to communicate accurately. A "holy book" which contains errors is highly suspect.

Most of the "holy books" of the world claim nothing more than to be the wisdom of the "ascended masters." They make no claims to divine inspiration.

The Book of Mormon, the Qur'an, and the Watchtower's writings all claim to be divinely inspired. Each has been documented to contain errors of fact. "Sacred Tradition" of the Catholic Church has repeatedly contradicted itself.

- II. Different world religions have different concepts of God.
 - A. Non-revelation religions: Atheism, Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age, Spiritism, etc. Most of these believe that God is an impersonal force, but some believe in many gods.
 - B. Revelation religions: Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christianity. These believe that God is a personal being, but each has a different concept of His nature.
 1. Mormons believe God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit used to be men and that each man has the potential to one day be a Father God in his own spiritual kingdom. A woman may or may not be raised from the dead into this kingdom, depending on the whims of her husband.
 2. Muslims believe in a God of absolute power. Love has nothing to do with their religion. Everything happens "as Allah wills." A man will be saved or lost depending on what Allah decides. Women are inferior to men in every way.
 3. Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus is Michael the archangel, a created being somewhat higher than but more or less opposite to Lucifer. Every person saves himself by obeying the directives of the Watchtower.
 4. Christians believe in a God of both power and love, justice and mercy. Jesus is God in human flesh and plainly shows us the character of God. He died in payment for our sins. We are saved through faith in Him, not by good works. We do good works not to earn salvation, but because of the new nature God puts in us when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
 - C. Cults (as opposed to non-Christian world religions) fall into two major categories:
 1. "Mind science," similar to Hinduism. These include New Age, Christian Science, Unity, etc.
 2. Pseudo-Christian cults. These depend upon the personality of a leader or small group of leaders. All deny the reliability of the Bible and the divinity of Jesus.

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