

## STUDY PAK 20

### THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS CULTS

“The essence of deception is to speak 90 per cent truth and 10 per cent error.”

~~J. Stafford Wright~~

#### I. AN INNUMERABLE MULTITUDE OF CULTS

After the flourishing of the modern missions movement, Satan began his own counterfeit movement. New religious movements, most claiming to be true Christianity, began by the thousands around the world. These were not usually recognized as genuine world religions but classified as cults.

The cults became an important part of that which was called Christianity primarily because of their sheer number.

#### II. THE DEFINITION OF A CULT

“A cult is a group or movement exhibiting \_\_\_\_\_, idea, or thing, and employing unethically manipulative techniques of persuasion and control (e.g., isolation from former friends and family, debilitation, use of special methods to heighten suggestibility and subservience powerful group pressures, information management, suspension of individuality or critical judgment, promotion of total dependency on the group and fear of leaving it, etc.) designed to advance the goals of the group’s leaders to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families, or the community.” (West & Langone, 1986)

#### III. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A CULT

- A. Authoritarian in their power structure
- B. Totalitarian in their control of the behavior of their members

- C. Pyramidal structure
- D. Uses thought reform techniques
- E. \_\_\_\_\_ (physical and/or psychological isolation)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- F. Used deception in recruiting and/or fund raising
- G. Promotes dependence of the members on the group
- H. Totalitarian in their worldview
- I. Uses mind altering techniques (chanting, meditation, hypnosis and various forms of repetitive actions) to stop normal critical thinking
- J. Appear exclusive and innovative
- K. Charismatic or messianic leader who is self-appointed and has a special mission in life
- L. Controls the flow of information
- M. Instills \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES OF CULTS**

- A. Pseudo-Christian – claiming to represent \_\_\_\_\_, e.g. Mormons, Unity, The Way, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventism
- B. Eastern Mysticism (New Age) – versions of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, built around \_\_\_\_\_, e.g. Transcendentalism, Divine Light Mission, Theosophy, Zen Buddhism
- C. The New Paganism – revivals of old-time pagan religions, e.g. The Druids, Native American religions
- D. The Occult – religious activities based upon manipulation of supernatural forces, e.g. Satanism, Witchcraft, WICCA, Demonism

**V. TWO TYPES OF CULTS**

- A. INCLUSIVIST – a cult that teaches universalism, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- B. EXCLUSIVIST – a cult that teaches that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## VI. FALSE THEOLOGY

False theology comes from \_\_\_\_\_ . See  
II Corinthians 4:4; 11:13-15; I Timothy 4:1; Acts 17:16-18; Psalm 106:34-39.

Cults are not the only manifestation of false, Satanic theology. Some others are major world religions and apostate forms of Christianity.

## VII. CULTS AND GOVERNMENT

The definition of a cult should be made by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ – not by government.

## VIII. A REMINDER OF THE DEMONIC NATURE OF CULTS

Merrill Unger (*Demons in the World Today*, p. 155) writes,

*“The propagating power of false religions.* The fanatical zeal of the cultist or the false prophet should not be surprising. When demons instigate errors, they take endless pains to propagate them. As Van Baalen aptly notes: “Cultists are not people who have to be aroused to an interest in religion.” Satan and his demon-helpers have always had an interest in religion and are themselves essentially religious. But theirs is a religion of pride, self-ambition, God-opposition, and deception. People who feel that all religions are good and who are unable to “discern spirits” (I Corinthians 12:10) are ready prospects for demonic deception.

The Apostle John presents the revelation that demonism is the impelling power that propagates false doctrine. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I John 4:1). A spirit may be believed, rightly or wrongly, when the “prophet” brings a message from the invisible spirit. The real speaker behind the prophet is either the spirit of God, the omniscient Teacher, or a demon spirit or spirits. “The Spirit of truth” leads into “all truth,” and speaks through the true man of God and teacher of sound doctrine (John 16:13). Demonic spirits under Satan, “the spirit of error” (I John 4:6), speak through the cultist or false religionist to disseminate erroneous doctrine and foster heresy.”

## STUDY PAK 21

### MODERNIST CHRISTIANITY

“As modernism attacks all that is vital in the Christian religion, the real issue presented is \_\_\_\_\_?”

~~William Jennings Bryan~~

There have always been attempts to “water-down” Christianity by merging it with non-Biblical ideas. The United States has always been home to major attempts to “modernize” Christianity.

#### I. DEISM

- A. Basic definition (Lord Herbert):
  1. God did create the world and man.
  2. Man must do good works to be acceptable to the Creator God.
  3. God punishes evil and rewards good.
  4. Virtue and piety are the road to heaven.
  5. The Bible is not a supernatural revelation from this God.
- B. Deism was very prominent in the late 1600’s and early 1700’s in the American colonies.
- C. Deism was effectively destroyed by the \_\_\_\_\_.
- D. Deism was virtually no factor by the time of the founding of the new republic (revisionist history notwithstanding).

#### II. UNIVERSALISM

Universalism was the belief that all humans would eventually \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. The movement eventually split.

- A. Universalists believed that God was too good to send anyone to hell.
- B. Unitarians believed that man was too good for God to send him to hell.

### III. TRANSCENDENTALISM

- A. Transcendentalism was the American version of rationalism. Rationalism claimed that man was capable of “pure reason” and that reason was man’s \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- B. Transcendentalism emphasized the idea that all men had a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ within them.
- C. Society could be transformed by encouraging the divinity within man.
- D. Transcendentalists fought for:
  - 1. an end to slavery and
  - 2. prison reform
  - 3. asylum reform
  - 4. prohibition
  - 5. woman’s suffrage
  - 6. public schools
- E. They were often allied with Bible believers in their campaigns.
- F. Transcendentalism was strong among radical Republicans in the aftermath of the Civil War.
- G. World War I and World War II dealt the formal teaching of transcendentalism serious harm.

### IV. SOCIAL DARWINISM

- A. The theory of evolution was applied by many to social development, government and even religion.
- B. Beliefs of Social Darwinism:
  - 1. Man is the highest animal – no soul.
  - 2. No moral absolutists – simply pragmatism.
  - 3. Man is inherently good.
  - 4. Government is the key to man’s proper evolution.  
“Rights can never be natural or God-given or absolute in any sense.”  
~~Sumner~~
  - 5. Social Darwinism became the justification for many business practices.

- C. The worship of science and education

**V. THE SOCIAL GOSPEL**

- A. The social gospel was the belief that the primary purpose of the church was \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. Roots of social gospel:
  - 1. Transcendentalism
  - 2. Finney's emphasis on social justice
- C. The concept of the social gospel was quickly taken over by political socialism. The social gospel: "...demands a God with whom men may cooperate without one to whom they must submit." A. C. McGiffert

**VI. THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM**

- A. The denial of the verbal, inerrant, inspiration of Scriptures became increasingly common around the world in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- B. In the 1930's – 1950's, Bible believers around the world separated from the influences of modernism. Battles were fought over denominational control, Bible colleges, mission boards, etc.
- C. Modernists usually won these battles and many new organizations were formed by Bible believers.
- D. Those opposed to modernism were referred to as \_\_\_\_\_.