



APOLOGETICS, MISSION & NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

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New religious movements form part of the mosaic that makes religious pluralism quite a challenge for Christian missions in the twenty-first century.¹ Of course mentioning missions and new religions in the same breath might raise a few eyebrows: is the apologist primarily a gate-keeper who fends off false doctrine, or can an apologist also actively seek to make disciples from the ranks of new religions? Our answer to that question will partly depend on where we place the most emphasis: (a). Do we regard adherents primarily as persons made in God's image bedeviled by the Fall and who "have been misdirected?"² Or (b). Do we regard them primarily as heretics and "satanic adversaries" who are destined for divine wrath?³

Now some apologists might take exception to this initial gambit of mine and feel this is simply pettifogging about words. It might be felt that this is an artificial dichotomy that deliberately polarizes the issues because an apologist can *both* fend off false doctrine *and* engage in evangelism. I certainly do not intend to imply that these twin functions are mutually exclusive. However, what I am inviting readers to seriously reflect on concerns our motives, methods and messages in dealing with cults and new religions. In particular, it is about our choice of vocabulary, the tone in which we write and speak, and our efforts to disciple people who are currently devotees in new religions.

If we are genuinely interested in communicating Jesus' call to discipleship to those who participate in new religions, then we must look at the shape and content of our messages to them. What parts of Scripture are we emulating when presenting the gospel and commending the faith? Do we consciously or unconsciously adopt a stance similar to these passages:

(a). Elijah versus the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18: 21-40)?

- (b). John the Baptist versus the Pharisees (Matthew 3: 7-10)?
- (c). Jesus versus the Pharisees (Matthew 12: 22-39, Luke 11:42-54)?
- (d). Paul versus the Judaizers (2 Cor. 11, Galatians)?

In the above examples we have direct and hostile confrontations occurring between a particular religious group inside the nation of Israel and God's prophet, or with Jesus, or with Paul and a congregation. Are these sorts of encounters intended in Scripture to be used as a guide to apologetics, evangelism and discipleship? That is one of the issues I hope we can reflect on once this discussion is concluded.

By way of contrast, to what extent do we approach devotees in the style of Jesus in his encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4: 1-42) and Paul's apologetic speech in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)? Are we following Paul's mission's principle to become all things to all people (1 Cor. 9: 20-23) when approaching the non-Christian devotee? Are we biblically winsome and persuasive in our apologies? Do we show courtesy and respect towards devotees or are we scornful, scathing and sarcastic in what we say and write? These too are issues I hope we will reflect on at the conclusion of this discussion.

On another tack, some countercult apologists might argue that apologetics is synonymous with evangelism. It might be argued that as adherents of new religions embrace false doctrine the tried and true method of apologetic refutation, coupled with an appeal to repent, is the only way to evangelize. This is what we have always done. So it might be genuinely felt that we are already engaged in mission and there is no further point to this discussion.

The temptation to cease reading here should be forestalled. It is almost a cliché to say that we are living in a time of rapid change. Yet it is precisely the ebb and flow of the tides of history that carry us along, and it can be very helpful for us when navigating those currents to take some bearings. By taking bearings I mean that we should from time to time pause in our journey and reflect on the cultural and historical contexts in which we find ourselves. We should also be willing to look at what our apologetic forebears have done and consider their strengths and limitations. By looking at what others have done or are doing, we can put our own labors into critical perspective and test the mettle of what we do.

Now there are things implied in what has just been said. One is that countercult apologetic methods need to be evaluated, and the very suggestion that our apologetic toolkit could stand some upgrading probably sounds shocking. Yet to paraphrase Socrates's aphorism, "the unexamined apologetic method is not worth using." If we evangelicals



do indeed believe that in everything we say or do, we do it for Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 3:17), then we surely will want to do our utmost in service for him in the field of new religions.

A different way of looking at ourselves in the mirror is through Ralph Neighbour's cheeky point about the church's famous last words: "we never tried it that way before."⁴ He made those remarks about resistant attitudes to change in the church. For my purposes Neighbour's remarks provoke a pertinent question for us to consider - how resistant are we to examining our methods and learning about other approaches? Are we so habituated to primarily using negative apologetics as the remedy for cults that we might be too rigid to be challenged by fresh ideas? Has our apologetic toolkit become a sacred cow that we tenaciously refuse to subject it to scrutiny? I am not suggesting here, by the by, that apologetics is misguided or useless at all, particularly since I have taught the subject of apologetics at a Bible college level for several years, am on the board of the recently established School of Apologetics at the Centre for Evangelism and Global Mission in Sydney, Australia and been a practitioner in the field of personal evangelism and apologetics since 1978.

David Wilkinson of St Johns College, University of Durham, in addressing the wider dimensions of apologetics observes:

Apologetics, like preaching, is an art to be developed rather than a science to be understood. In developing apologetics for our time, we need to rediscover its biblical roots. Often our western theological tradition has narrowed the practice of apologetics making it largely irrelevant to contemporary mission. A broader biblical view allows us to reformulate apologetics as an essential part of Christian ministry and evangelism in the new millennium.⁵

What Wilkinson intimates about reformulating apologetics to suit our cultural circumstances has some bearing on the sub-discipline of countercult apologetic ministry. We need to consider what our cultural circumstances now comprise in view of religious pluralism being a street-life reality in most parts of the world. For some western Christians it probably comes as a great jolt to realize that the privileged societal position of Church dominance has been undermined or in many cases has ceased to be a living reality. One thing we might find helpful to rediscover is how the children of Israel and then the apostolic church functioned in cultural contexts where they were in the minority rubbing

shoulders with many competing religious options. As Wilkinson calls for a rediscovery of the biblical roots of apologetics, so too we should learn from our biblical forebears in the ways they lived, ministered and engaged in mission with rival religious movements.

Another implication to my earlier remarks is the distinct possibility that we might not be properly engaged in mission as it is classically understood and practiced. That probably sounds absurd. Yet we must surely wonder why is it then that westerners who participate in cults and new religions are not being disciplined by us en masse? Why do some evangelical missiologists look askance at our activities and cringe? Why do some sociologists and phenomenologists dare to observe that we are so caught up in preaching to the choir? Why is it that few cult devotees ever end up in our churches as servants of Christ? Are we construing boundary-maintenance against heresy as being coterminous with evangelism? Maybe we could learn some fresh tricks of the trade from our colleagues in world missions that will become a blessing to the church at large and for ourselves. For the issue at hand is not about jettisoning the analysis of heresy in the light of orthodoxy. Rather the basic question is whether evangelism and discipleship of devotees in new religious movements is taking place on any serious and sustained level.

For some readers this call for reflection about our methods and strategies may seem odd or even provoke some impatience. Most of us as apologists for the faith have happily applied methods and forms of argument that have been formulated by others. We have probably been content to follow those who have pioneered countercult ministry without much need to call our methods into question. However it would do us no harm to consider how and why these methods were formulated, particularly when in recent years various apologists have expressed disquiet about existing models through their essays or in public conventions. When debates about method emerge in a discipline they may arise because there are new circumstances that highlight inadequacies with existing approaches. Although methodological debates can sometimes polarize the participants, they can also be the catalyst for new and productive enterprises.⁶

The purpose of this critical discussion is to evaluate some of our existing methods, and propose some improvements by gleaning insights from cross-cultural missiology, so that we can be more effective in our engagement with today's world. To achieve that goal this rather long paper is divided into four separate documents. The first involves a description and positive appraisal of the pre-eminent apologetic method used in ministry to new religions, the heresy-rationalist apologia. The second illustrates limitations and weakness with the heresy-rationalist approach. The third carries on with a brief description and analysis of



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five other models used: end-times prophecy & conspiracy, spiritual warfare, apostate testimonies, cultural apologetics and behavioralist apologetics. The fourth and final installment provides a skeletal outline of the directions we need to take to create a holistic, integrated approach that can have maximum effectiveness in the proclamation of the gospel and the task of discipleship.

CONTOURS OF COUNTERCULT APOLOGETICS (Part One)

Since the nineteenth century a grass roots Christian countercult movement has emerged to contest the validity of the new religions.⁷ Most of the protagonists who have shaped it have been clergy, ex-devotees, and lay apologists, but missiologists and religious studies scholars have been in the minority.⁸ Although he was not the first writer to tackle the cults, there can be little doubt that *the* pivotal figure was Walter R. Martin (1928-1989). His widely circulated audio taped lectures, the *Bible Answer Man* radio show and Christian Research Institute ministry - along with over 750,000 copies sold of his book *The Kingdom of the Cults* - influenced a generation of evangelicals with his method of doctrinal refutations.⁹ Most countercult apologists probably look back with some nostalgic fondness at Walter Martin.¹⁰

However nostalgia notwithstanding we must confront the fact that today countercult apologetics is in many ways a fringe activity in the life and work of the church. This is largely true at a local parish level, but it is also the case that many denominational hierarchies overlook or ignore what we do, and even in the curriculum of theological institutions the subject is rarely a compulsory subject. Major missions organizations are geared up for mission outreach to primal religions and the world religions (Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic), yet it has only been in very recent times that a few overtures have come from missiologists to incorporate new religions in their work.¹¹ So countercult apologetics ministries by and large have received scant attention in the mainstream agendas of denominations and mission bodies.¹²

Countercult apologetics has proven an attractive outlet for many lay people who have sought a ministry niche where they could develop skills and exercise their talents in service for Christ. Believers, who might otherwise feel disempowered by sparse opportunities to be useful in their local parish, are blessed with the opportunity to serve and to even have some ministry recognition through countercult activities. Yet in spite of these personal blessings, the stark reality remains that countercult

ministry is generally relegated to the fringes of the local congregation's agenda.

My survey of countercult literature (which in terms of reading spans from 1898 until the present, but here is necessarily compressed) reveals that certain apologetic styles have predominated since the end of the nineteenth century. I have previously charted five of the six styles mentioned here, but as most readers are unlikely to have immediate access to that published essay, I will incorporate some of that material here.¹³ My categorizations are admittedly artificial constructs designed to make sense of disparate data, which the literature itself does not normally make such strong self-demarcations over. Some apologists tend to combine elements from two or more of the models described here. As each model is defined and outlined, attention will also be drawn to limitations or matters of contention that affect it. The evaluation is preliminary in nature and open to modification or deepening in the light of any further relevant data. My standpoint is *not* from the lofty peak of Mount Everest looking down in disfavor on the labors of contemporary colleagues or apologetic forebears.

1. Heresy-rationalist apologetics

I have coined this hyphenated term to distinguish or identify the two most prominent features found in this approach, namely the detection of heresy and the use of rational arguments to debunk the movement under scrutiny. All I mean by this label then is that new religions are analysed through the grid of heresy versus orthodoxy, and their revelatory claims and theological deviancy are deconstructed. This approach has a long established pedigree stretching from A. H. Barrington's *Anti-Christian Cults* (1898), Lewis Radford's *Ancient Heresies in Modern Dress* (1913), J. K. van Baalen's *The Chaos of Cults* (1938), Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults* (1965), up to John Ankerberg and John Weldon's *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (1999).¹⁴ In addition to the analysis of heresy, some apologists such as Norman Geisler, Craig Hawkins, Francis Beckwith and Stephen Parrish, have applied or even concentrated their apologias on philosophical analyses, identifying logical, epistemological and metaphysical flaws, and arguing that the teachings of new religions are ultimately irrational.¹⁵

An adjunct to this model is that some (but not all) apologists include arguments that defend the historical trustworthiness of the bible, the evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus - thereby offering proofs for his divinity - a defense of miracles, and theodicies (arguments justifying God's moral goodness in a world of evil).¹⁶ Other apologists have sought to discredit new religions on the basis of moral defects in the life of a



movement's founder-leader, and by highlighting controversial events in the emergence and development of a group.¹⁷

While evangelicals have primarily favored this model it has also been the foremost one used by Lutheran, Reformed and Roman Catholic apologists writing on new religions.¹⁸ Apologists who are committed to the heresy-rationalist model may justify their position by pointing to the many biblical injunctions about false teaching and false prophets (e.g. Deut. 13:1-5, Matt. 7:15ff, Acts 20:26-32; 2 Pet. 2:1-3, 1 John 4:1-3). They can also appeal to the example of the Church Fathers who confronted a variety of Christological heresies.

During the nineteenth century quite a few of the sectarian or cultic movements that emerged in Europe and North America appealed to the Bible as a source of authority for their dogmas such as the Christadelphians, the Mormons and those who followed Charles Taze Russell's writings. As the dominant religious expression of the West was Christianity the point of apologetic engagement in those days had much to do with biblical authority, hermeneutics and exegesis. That original line of engagement was reinforced and sustained during the twentieth century as Christians found themselves rubbing shoulders with adherents of many more new religious movements. This original cultural context for Christians seemed to be one where we were in the majority, and so appealing directly to Scripture, as the popularly recognized source of spiritual authority, seemed very appropriate.

Whether those state of cultural affairs remain the case today is a moot point in nations like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and much of Western Europe. Christians in these nations often uphold a high view of Scripture, and in the case of European history the church has a long and rich heritage. However it is no longer the case in these nations that when the Bible is appealed to that non-Christians automatically concede they must roll over like a dog and play dead. Put another way, contemporary non-Christians have grown up in cultural contexts where most people do not accept that the Bible is God's authoritative word. For most people they have grown up in domestic circumstances where participation in a local church was non-existent, and religious education at school either minimal or unknown. The broad biblical story from creation to the eschaton and the doctrinal concepts and jargon associated with them are simply alien to the vocabulary of most people outside the church. The Christian viewpoint does not have a monopoly where the majority of people give some sort of tacit acknowledgement that

Christianity alone has the truth. Instead most western societies seem to consist of an association of various belief systems that vie for attention.

In the case of the USA, Christianity has certainly played a tremendous role in the culture since the Pilgrim Fathers. However, it is also true that US history has been religiously pluralistic since colonial times.¹⁹ Perhaps the acute sense in which evangelicals now feel new religions impinge on them so close to home simply reflects a greater awareness of what was once a fringe or subterranean element on the American religious landscape.²⁰

It should also be noted here that there are basically two categories of apologists. One comprises those who hold tertiary credentials in theology, ranging from graduates with degrees at the baccalaureate level all the way up to those who hold doctoral degrees. These apologists normally benefit from the research skills and training in critical analysis of arguments they gained from their tertiary education. Several apologists hold positions as lecturers or professors in theological seminaries. Others who hold both undergraduate and post-graduate qualifications may be employed in para-church ministries.

The second category comprises lay Christian people who are either former adherents of new religions or who may never have been a devotee but has tremendous zeal and passion about sharing their faith with others. Many apologists in this category participate in para-church ministries too. The level of critical acumen among apologists in this category can vary. There are those who through long years of experience and reading have cultivated some competency in research and analysis. However, there are others who primarily rely on materials produced by other apologists and apply that in their evangelism. It is also probably true to say there are a few maverick characters who operate in isolation to, or even in opposition to, other countercult ministries because they have concluded that most apologists are tainted with compromised beliefs or associate with people classified as apostate.²¹

1.1. Some Positive Features

Now at this juncture we must consider the positive features and contributions of apologists. The first positive point is that this model excels in assisting Christians to discern the differences between biblical orthodox doctrine and heterodox doctrine. By clarifying both what we believe and why we believe it, heresy-rationalist apologetics enables the individual to grow in confidence about fundamental teachings. The individual is equipped with some basic skills to detect, reject and refute heterodox belief. This is particularly useful for lay believers who are guided into discovering how key doctrines - such as the Trinity, Deity



and humanity of Christ, and the atonement - fit together. Perhaps the most commendable feature of this model is the depth of seriousness with which the authors take the authority and inspiration of scripture. There is a consistent unswerving loyalty to the verities of scripture as the final court of appeal over all teaching. The more philosophical apologias are also beneficial insofar as the author mentors the reader in the rudiments of logic and highlights the grounds on which knowledge and arguments need to be justified. When apologists sort out the differences between orthodox Christian beliefs and those of the new religions, and alert the Body of Christ accordingly, they assume the very important role of teachers inside the church. This is one of the functions of a teacher in Scripture (e.g. Matt. 28:19; Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Tim. 3:14-4:5). It is a role that must necessarily endure in each generation.

1.1.2. Some Exemplary Academic Books

In this model there are some noteworthy academic texts. One good example of a technical piece of evangelical scholarship is Robert Countess's analysis of the Jehovah's Witnesses translation of the New Testament.²² It is a model of scholarly precision. The recent collaborative work *The New Mormon Challenge*, which brings together several evangelical scholars from different fields, likewise shows the level of sophistication that academic treatments can and should attain.²³ Similarly, Francis Beckwith and Stephen Parrish's philosophical analysis of the Mormon concept of God is a model of keen reasoning.²⁴ More sophisticated projects like these three examples are to be encouraged.

Another interesting example is found in the three-volume work of Baptist theologians Gordon Lewis and Bruce Demarest entitled *Integrative Theology*.²⁵ Lewis and Demarest tackled theology using a six-step method that defined the topic, considered the topic historically, examined the biblical data, systematized the material, apologetically interacted with other positions, and concluded with the practical application of theology. With regards to the function and purpose of apologetics they stated:

ōIn an increasingly complicated world, no discipline, and certainly not a comprehensive discipline, can put it all together by itself. In doing theology it is therefore necessary to assume what has been established particularly in apologetics. Apologetics, having examined epistemological issues and alternatives with an openness to all sources of knowledge, establishes reliable criteria by which to evaluate truth claims in religion. Accepted as true are those hypotheses about reality that are logically noncontradictory, factually adequate, and existentially viable.

After examining numerous alternative world views, apologists argue that logical, empirical, and existential data are best accounted for by the Christian theistic world view.²⁶

The great strength with this enterprise is that Lewis and Demarest quite properly tie together the biblical, historical, systematic, apologetic and practical aspects of theology. This interdisciplinary approach that they have taken offers countercult apologists a signpost to consider the integration of apologetics with other theological and academic studies when analyzing the cults.

There are also two noteworthy contributions by Lutheran theologian and lawyer John Warwick Montgomery: one on the contentious subject of Rosicrucian origins, and the other being his more general analysis of esoteric or occult phenomena. Montgomery has been popularly dubbed "apostle of the scholars."²⁷ He is not generally regarded as a scholar or apologist in the field of new religious movements, but is far better known as an apologist for the positive evidences on behalf of the Christ-event.²⁸ However he by no means considers the field of countercult apologetics irrelevant. The Simon Greenleaf School of Law was Montgomery's brainchild, and in the 1980s the MA curriculum included the subject of the cults and occult, which was taught by Walter Martin, with assistance from Bob and Gretchen Passantino. Several countercult apologists trained there under the supervision of both Montgomery and Walter Martin.²⁹

One key to understanding Montgomery's approach to apologetics and theology generally is that he follows his mentor Luther in operating from the incarnation of Christ and he proceeds on the basis of both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.³⁰

Montgomery's *Cross and Crucible* derives from his doctoral dissertation at the University of Strasbourg.³¹ In this particular monograph Montgomery reassessed the life and labors of the seventeenth century Lutheran pastor, Johann Valentin Andreae. Andreae has been the focus of much conjecture over his alleged role in the composition of the three founding documents of the Rosicrucians. The majority view has been that Andreae was the author of these texts. Montgomery, however, undertook a thorough and meticulous examination of Andreae's writings in Latin and German, many of which have been in manuscript form since the seventeenth century. He painstakingly documented Andreae's unswerving commitment to Lutheran orthodoxy and established that Andreae was opposed to the Rosicrucian manifestoes. This is not the place to revisit the whole scholarly debate, but those who continue to take the opposing view have been obliged to look at Montgomery's



contribution on the matter.³² Suffice to say as James Moore in another context admirably acknowledged, “John Montgomery exemplified lofty standards of historical research.”³³

Montgomery’s more popular book *Principalities and Powers* offered a sophisticated analytical interpretation of occult phenomena rarely emulated by other apologists writing on this particular topic.³⁴ Irving Hexham has stated, “The strength of the book lies in its historical analysis and logical criticism.”³⁵ Cyril Barber, an evangelical specialist in library science, likewise underscored the scholarly depth to Montgomery’s book.³⁶

1.1.3. Exemplary Popular Texts

At the popular and semi-popular level of readership several fine examples spring to mind. One distinguished pioneer of countercult apologetics was the Reformed theologian and pastor Jan Karel van Baalen (1890-1968). His book *The Chaos of Cults* was grounded in both Scripture and the Reformed Confessional documents, which formed the critical basis for his lucid demarcations between Christian orthodoxy and heterodoxy. As a general survey text, van Baalen’s book did not purport to be exhaustive or in-depth, but it nonetheless reflected a scholar’s precision matched with a passion for truth and evangelism. He carefully focused on the primary theological divergences and largely eschewed engaging in character assassination of the founders and leaders of the groups he profiled. Whilst his text is now out of date, it is a pity that his exemplary theological approach is not consistently emulated at a popular level.³⁷

Robert Finnerty’s examination of the Church Fathers’ teachings versus the claims of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society helped bridge a longstanding gap in evangelical studies.³⁸ Robert Bowman’s examination of the principles that undergird the way in which Jehovah’s Witnesses read the Bible makes one wish for more studies along these lines.³⁹ Douglas Groothuis’ study of New Age interpretations of Jesus is a fine example of a readable study that is grounded in primary sources and assembles arguments that could be prudently used in personal witness.⁴⁰ James Sire’s *Scripture Twisting* is likewise a good popular primer for evangelicals in discovering how *not* to interpret the Bible.⁴¹ Similarly Sire’s *The Universe Next Door* has quite rightly served as a popular primer on worldviews generally, with useful arguments that inculcate a better appreciation of the core tenets of Christianity for the believer.⁴² I could list several more but space limitations preclude this.

1.1.4. People Have Been Converted

The heresy-rationalist apologetic has sometimes proven to be valuable for individual devotees who have subsequently converted to orthodox Christian faith. For example, there are the cases of William Cetnar and Ted Dencher both of whom were Jehovah's Witnesses. At a time when they had already begun to re-evaluate their commitments, Cetnar personally encountered Walter Martin, while Dencher came across Martin's book *Jehovah of the Watchtower*. Both men attest to the positive impact of Martin's ministry in their own journey out of the Watchtower and into evangelical Christianity. Yet it must be stressed that in both cases Martin's influence was neither the sole nor even the decisive factor, but it was certainly one element in a wider mosaic of issues.⁴³

1.1.5. Worldwide Church of God

Again the heresy-rationalist model played a positive part in the theological renovation of the Worldwide Church of God with apologists such as Ruth Tucker and Hank Hanegraaff involved in dialogue with church leaders.⁴⁴ However it would be too simplistic to attribute that renovation solely to the external impact of countercult apologetics. During Herbert Armstrong's reign theological dissent was suppressed or dissidents were expelled (Garner Ted Armstrong was expelled for moral failures). After his death dissent began to be voiced as some church leaders sought to explore unanswered questions and scrutinized Armstrong's own prophetic claims. Some who had been studying outside of Ambassador College during Armstrong's life brought their own unresolved questions into the open. As one Australian church leader indicated to me, pre-existing factors loom large in any attempt to understand how and why the church overturned Armstrong's eccentric theology in favour of orthodoxy and at the cost of schisms.⁴⁵ Finally, as should be expected, it will take quite some time for lay members of this church to work through the theological issues intellectually and emotionally and achieve spiritual stability.

1.1.6. Practical Advice For Evangelism

Some writers (but certainly not all) who operate from the heresy-rationalist approach offer helpful insights or advice on how to proceed in evangelistic encounters. Walter Martin commendably provided chapters in his monographs on how to meet with Mormon missionaries, Jehovah's Witnesses and New Agers.⁴⁶ Martin's advice was grounded in both Scripture and field experiences with devotees, which is far and away more helpful than imaginary conversations crafted from the comfort zone of one's armchair. He further sought to augment the development of



practical tools for evangelism initially through composing tracts and distributing audio cassettes of his lectures.

Another creative effort along this line came through *Walter Martin's Cults Reference Bible*, which reproduced the Authorized Version annotated with rebuttals to commonly misinterpreted passages, included introductory essays about cults, and a transcript of Martin's lecture "The Do's and Don'ts of Witnessing to the Cults".⁴⁷ He also translated some of his practical insights into the Vision House film series "Martin Speaks Out on the Cults".⁴⁸

Martin's prescience led him in the early 1960s to consider the development of computer data banks that would supply evangelists, missionaries and apologists with the fruit of his labors.⁴⁹ With the development of the Internet as a tool of mass communication Martin's vision has translated into opportunities for the rapid exchange of information, and contact with devotees of new religions in chat rooms and newsgroups. It has seen the formation of some useful databases about new religions. The downside is that anybody who can co-ordinate his or her fingers over a PC keyboard can load up material whose quality and cogency may be of doubtful apologetic and evangelistic value. A concomitant of that is that some lay apologists may end up being so reliant on the Internet for accessing data that they will never discover the rudiments of information retrieval in reference libraries and possibly miss out on developing the skills needed for field research and street-life evangelism.⁵⁰

Aspects of Martin's emphasis on skills and tools have been mirrored in different ways in Geisler and Rhodes' *When Cultists Ask*, Ronald Enroth's *Evangelising the Cults*, in several of the Zondervan series of booklets "Guide to Cults and Religious Movements", and in regular witnessing tips columns featured in periodicals like *Christian Research Journal* and *The Watchman Expositor*.⁵¹

1.1.7. A New Genre Needed

Unfortunately, practical advice is not a consistent feature of the heresy-rationalist literature. We can no longer afford the indulgent luxury of writing about new religions primarily in theoretical terms, as we have a glut of literature repeatedly pointing out the heresies of groups like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and New Age. We really need to go beyond reinventing the wheel in our literature and explore the relatively uncharted territory of the practical dynamics of mission and evangelism. More emphasis needs to be placed on practical advice about how to share

one's faith. As practical application and advice has been missing from quite a few books, it raises the question to what extent we are armchair critics. This problem is not peculiar to countercult literature. Some missiological literature can also be long on theory and rather short on practical application. Evangelical publishing houses ought to be insisting that we produce textbooks and training materials that include evangelistic case studies, practical exercises on how to share one's faith, and so forth.⁵²

Another genre of literature also needs to be concentrated on: namely writing books for the mass market that specifically addresses the non-Christian's quest for meaning and is expressed in a language they can comprehend. So much of what has been composed by apologists only really speaks to the Christian believer, and the distribution of this material is largely confined to Christian networks of bookstores. Countercult apologists are needed who can compose books that are on the wavelength of the adherents of new religions. To achieve that end will require not only good writing skills, but will also mean that apologists must begin addressing the sorts of questions non-Christians are actually asking rather than questions we believe or imagine they are asking. To ascertain what their questions really comprise will mean that we spend time conversing with adherents before we start writing.

There is a lesson for authors and publishers to take to heart here. Consider the case of the Irish-born apologist C. S. Lewis. Lewis had the happy knack of writing in a conversational style that could be understood by a non-Christian reader who had only the most basic sort of education. He was a lucid writer. When Lewis began writing apologetic material texts in the 1930s and 1940s his books were not released by a major British Christian publishing house. His publisher, Geoffrey Bles, was a very small outfit that had its books released into the mass market. Lewis's books belonged in the mass market and they sold there rather than just being exclusively distributed through Christian bookstores.⁵³

1.1.7.1. Australian Christian Book Industry

Each western nation has its own cultural context and peculiarities and my next few remarks need to be understood as being a reflection of circumstances in Australia. These circumstances may be eccentric to this continent, but hopefully the lessons drawn here might still be meaningful elsewhere. Since the 1980s the landscape of Australian Christian bookstores has undergone drastic changes. Prior to the 1980s the bookstore industry was characterized by many small shops scattered throughout urban areas and in rural towns. There were also some modest sized networks of stores operated by para-church ministries. Behind the bookstores there were several different Australian distributors who had



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contractual arrangements with British and North American publishers. Alongside this there were some small Australian Christian publishing companies, some of which were linked to denominations or para-church groups.⁵⁴

Towards the late 1970s a new trajectory developed when one particular bookstore operator challenged the status quo by organizing bulk purchases of titles directly from the UK and USA, and passing on to customers a discount-driven menu of books. Tensions emerged between this operator and the established industry. In the passage of time more and more customers patronized the maverick operator and both distributors and bookstores felt the pinch. Some bookstores went out of business and one by one the book distributors folded. Although small bookstores still exist, the Australian Christian book market is now dominated by two competing nationwide book-chains that offer discount-catalogue sales. The larger of these two chains is the company that commenced the discount approach in the late 1970s.

Even though the accent has been on delivering fast, efficient service coupled with discount prices on books, the dominance of these two Christian bookstore chains has been accompanied by an acute absence of Christian literature in secular bookstores. Secular bookstores are aware of the duopoly that exists in the Australian Christian book industry, and secular store managers do not see any point in attempting to engage in a discount price battle with them. Thus very little orthodox or evangelical literature is stocked by the secular bookstores. What they do carry in stock on the subject of Christianity tends to be controversial titles like Laurence Gardner's *Bloodline of the Holy Grail*, Bishop Spong's books, Barbara Thiering's *Jesus the Man*, and so forth.

Now here is the sad irony: during the last two decades of the twentieth century the Australian Christian book industry was completely altered by this duopoly. Christians diverted their patronage to the duopoly with their offer of inexpensive books. So the patronage and range of orthodox titles swiftly diminished in the secular stores. Yet at the same time, interest in non-Christian spirituality began to surge. Just at the crucial juncture when Australians began to seriously delve into spiritual questions and practices, Christian literature became scarce in secular bookstores. As seekers browsed the secular shelves for answers there was little on offer from Christians. Instead what shoppers found for sale were books by Shirley Maclaine, James Redfield, Deepak Chopra, and the Dalai Lama. In 1996 Sydney journalist Ali Grippier wryly observed:

“Australians buy more self-development and spiritual books than the US and Britain – It seems that when Australians are searching for meaning these days, they walk straight past the church and into their nearest bookshop, the shelves of which are starting to sag with how-to-change-your-life tomes.”⁵⁵

Of course other historical and sociological reasons need to be considered when looking at why Australians are gravitating to non-institutional forms of spirituality and staying away from the Church. The main point is that Australian Christians buy their literature inside the Christian sub-community, and so very little Christian material is available in the general mass market for non-Christians to read. The number of non-Christian readers who would know of the existence of the Christian book-chain duopoly is negligible.

When one considers the range and depth of issues that non-Christians are concerned about generally (as well as those we would identify apologetically) and then compare that to the selection of titles available in the Christian duopoly: one shudders to think about the utter paucity of the evangelical material. In other words, even if evangelical books in general were for sale in secular stores, much of what is on offer in Australia is hopelessly superficial, trite and often culturally irrelevant. Indeed the lion’s share of sales in Christian bookstores is not for Bibles and books, but rather is covered by what is cheekily called holy hardware: CDs, teddy bears, bumper stickers and coffee mugs inscribed with bible verses. Even more ironic was the fact in the late 1990s that the most stolen item from Christian bookstores was the “What Would Jesus Do” badges and bracelets! It is at this juncture that one is reminded of Mark Noll’s general and gloomy diagnosis about the “scandal of the evangelical mind.”⁵⁶

The commercial ethos that appears to drive the Christian bookstores is not being matched with quality literature that bites into the climate of opinion in society generally. When we narrow the parameters down to the world’s religions and new religions, we really must take stock: how much of what is currently in print by apologists is addressed to the Christian believer and how many titles are specifically written for Christians to hand on to their non-Christian relatives, friends and work colleagues? We do need to re-enter the secular book market but armed with titles that address non-Christians on their wavelengths, tackling their issues and directing them on to the person of Christ as the fulfillment of their quest for meaning. So my plea is for both authors and publishers to creatively collaborate on producing apologetic books



worthy of mass dissemination in the secular trade as part of an overall ministry strategy.

1.1.8. From Armchairs To Fieldwork

Before we do that though we must leave our armchairs and as a matter of ministry routine set aside time for proper field research. Field research involves meeting devotees at their festivals, ashrams, retreat centers and places of worship, to ascertain not just what they believe but to also observe the dynamics of their faith, how they apply and live by their faith. Time spent in observing the culture of the new religion and becoming acquainted with devotees is one of the first steps on the road to mission. To undertake proper field research means learning how to use a range of tools and asking questions that are not just driven by an apologetics agenda. Field research is not coterminous with trawling around Internet sites established by new religions or mere discussions in Internet chat rooms and newsgroups. Handing out tracts at Jehovah's Witnesses conventions, and when Mormon temples are open for public inspection, or picketing a Unification Church mass marriage ceremony, is likewise not the same thing as engaging in field study. These activities have their place in confrontational forms of ministry but we must not mistakenly think of them in terms of "field research."⁵⁷ The issue of field research is something we shall return to in part four of this paper. Critical reflections on the limitations of the heresy-rationalist apologetic model are the subject of discussion in Part Two of this paper to which we shall now turn.

2. Preliminary Evaluation of Heresy-Rationalist Apologias

Although the heresy-rationalist model has had some very positive outcomes as intimated in Part One, its limitations and potential misuse need to be acknowledged and addressed. In making the following observations let it be understood that this is not intended to be a blanket judgment on - or even rejection of - the contributions of all apologists. The matters I raise here are among quite a few that I have mulled over since the mid-1980s. I have found myself wrestling with them as one whose initial interest in countercult ministry was sparked by Walter Martin and other eminent apologists using the heresy-rationalist approach. My foray here is preliminary in nature and does not pretend to be comprehensive or exhaustive. Hopefully my examples will serve as a positive goad for all of us to strive at presenting the highest quality material and that we might encourage each other in that effort.

Readers should also take note that in what I present as illustrations of problems, I have sought to identify issues rather than "outing" personalities. None of us like being the focus of criticism and I feel that little can be constructively achieved in this discussion by pointing the finger at individuals. If we are all honest with ourselves, we know within that we too have probably at one time or another fallen foul of some of these apologetic infractions.

In much the same irenic way as Don Carson sought to illustrate how learned scholars can sometimes slip up and commit exegetical fallacies, so the focus of what I report on here is about critical issues or limitations of method.⁵⁸ It is not about attacking individual apologists. So it is in that spirit of irenic reflection that the names of contemporary living apologists have been virtually excised from the body of the text and relegated to end note bibliographical citations. I do not revel in attempts to critically decimate or deride other individuals and I am totally disinterested in indulging in un-Christian tit-for-tat sarcastic personal broadsides between apologists. The tone and tenor of personal broadsides strikes me as indicating character deficiencies and the possible spiritual immaturity of an individual. Shouting matches simply obfuscate the need for honest critical examination of our methods.

2.1. Problematic Reappraisal of Adventism

The first problematic example concerns two deceased apologists. The focal point is not on their personal character or integrity but rather on a controversy that they were prominently involved in. The point being made concerns the adequacy of this approach.

The case then concerns the dialogues between Donald Grey Barnhouse, Walter Martin and certain leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Space limitations preclude recounting here the specific details as to how these dialogues were initiated between 1955-56.⁵⁹ What we should note is that prior to these meetings both Barnhouse and Martin had classified Seventh-day Adventism as a cult. In the original edition of his book *The Rise of the Cults* Martin indicated that the Adventists were "theologically the nearest to orthodoxy."⁶⁰ He noted their acceptance of the doctrine of the Trinity, biblical authority, the vicarious atonement, deity and bodily resurrection of Jesus, and these points inclined Martin to regard Seventh-day Adventism "as an evangelical though misled sect of believers."⁶¹

As one of the foremost proponents of the heresy-rationalist method Martin stated in 1985 "I have always stressed the importance of doctrinal integrity in my evaluations of religious movements."⁶² Martin's approach to dialogue with Adventist leaders and pastors therefore entailed seeking answers to doctrinal questions. The initial results of



these meetings were that both Barnhouse and Martin came to regard the Adventists as genuine evangelicals who affirmed the central tenets of Christian orthodoxy. Barnhouse and Martin noted though that Adventists still adhered to some heterodox doctrines, but these were deemed to be secondary in nature.⁶³ The initial action on the part of those Adventist leaders who met with Martin was the preparation of a volume that addressed forty-eight doctrinal questions he had posed entitled *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*.⁶⁴

While Barnhouse and Martin felt they had achieved a theological rapprochement with the Adventist leaders, the reactions to these dialogues both inside evangelical and Adventist circles was very mixed. Evangelicals and fundamentalists who queried or rejected Martin's position included John Gerstner, A. A. Hoekema, Gordon Lewis, Harold Lindsell, Louis Talbot and J. K. van Baalen.⁶⁵ Some like Hoekema and Talbot insisted that Adventism was a cult, whereas others such as Lindsell regarded it as having fallen into the error of Galatianism. Martin did respond to some of his evangelical peers in a lengthy appendix in *The Kingdom of the Cults*, and although Adventist scholars have had books released by evangelical publishing houses, unanimity on the status of Adventism remains a contentious issue among apologists.⁶⁶

M. L. Andreasen, a prominent Adventist theologian who was excluded from participating in the dialogues, regarded the rapprochement as a sell-out, and along with others rejected the *Questions on Doctrine* volume.⁶⁷ Martin's analysis of what he saw as secondary but heterodox doctrines prompted Adventist theologians, including some who participated in the dialogues - such as W. E. Read and R. Allan Anderson - to defend those distinctive Adventist teachings in a monograph entitled *Doctrinal Discussions*.⁶⁸ So although Martin had argued his case against what he detected as doctrinal aberrations, he did not offer any published rejoinder to the Adventist rebuttals to his apologia. The subsequent history of Seventh-day Adventism has seen the emergence of various factions and further internal dissent.⁶⁹

Although Barnhouse and Martin were willing to reclassify Seventh-day Adventists from a cult to a heterodox evangelical church, their case failed to achieve consensus within evangelical ranks. This particular example represents an acute problem because the results of applying doctrinal analysis has not carried the day either with fellow apologists or all members of the Seventh-day Adventist churches. Unlike the encounter between evangelicals and the Worldwide Church of God, the

Adventist theologians had not initiated any substantial doctrinal revisions on the basis of contact with evangelical apologists. Indeed internal reactions within Adventist circles to the publication *Questions on Doctrine* reflects deep rifts over the church's identity as it appertains to distinctive doctrines. Whilst Martin always remained open to the possibility and even necessity of revising his standpoint in the light of developments, the heresy-rationalist apologia here appears to have opened a veritable Pandora's box for both Adventists and evangelicals.⁷⁰ If you wish, the jury is still deliberating the matter fifty years after the initial dialogue.

2.2. Troubled Waters of Anti-Mormon Apologetics

"It is far easier to caricature and ridicule the Mormon doctrine of deity than it is to analyse it seriously and accurately," so Australian ex-Mormon John Bracht stated in the opening remarks of his 1988 Master of Arts thesis.⁷¹ Bracht's provocative remarks continued in this vein:

Anti-Mormon writers, more often than not, simply draw attention to Mormon theology in the most simplistic and sensationalist terms, sometimes without comment or qualification. The theology is rarely examined fairly and few of its amateur critics are competent to assess its philosophical implications. The primary approach of such writers is polemical. This is largely the result of seeing Mormonism as an 'irreconcilable Christian heresy' and a pernicious cult, instead of recognizing it as a new world religion. Decker and Hunt's book, *The God Makers* is subtitled *A Shocking Exposé of What the Mormon Church REALLY Believes*. It is brimming over with sensationalistic innuendo, emotive language and out-right misrepresentation. The book represents a new low in anti-Mormon literature, which is surprising for its more recent publication date (1984). Rather than attempting to analyse the Mormon Church with integrity in a serious and enlightening manner, it compares the 'Zion Curtain' in Utah with the Iron Curtain. It labels Mormonism as a 'totalitarian power' and suggests that the Utah-based church may well succeed in turning the U.S.A. into a theocracy, in the first stage of a takeover of the world. Such an 'extremely disturbing possibility' is admitted by the authors to be 'highly speculative and improbable', yet they present it regardless.⁷²

In his thesis Bracht argued that the Mormon doctrine of God represented one of the strongest apologetic points of appeal that the Latter-Day Saints had. He maintained then that this particular Mormon doctrine constituted one of the greatest apologetic challenges for Christians to tackle seriously. He observed:



Mormonism as a movement within Christianity may already have proven itself to be the bearer of the most comprehensive and effective challenge to Trinitarian orthodoxy in the history of the church. It has gone far beyond the Christological controversies of the first four centuries. Only in this instance the challenge has been mounted not in a strongly emerging catholic world favoured by a Christian emperor, but in an environment of the greatest religious pluralism where people seem as willing to listen to the Mormon apologetic as they do the Christian.⁷³

Earlier in his thesis Bracht proposed some reasons as to why the Mormon doctrine of God may actually have some appeal for Christians or nominal church-going folk:

Since they [i.e. countercult apologists] are writing largely for Christians, writers of anti-Mormon works assume that their readers will immediately be able to contrast Mormon teaching with their own and dismiss the former as unworthy of their attention. They forget that many Christians rarely stop to reflect on their own convictions about the nature of God or the Trinity, much less articulate why they subscribe to such orthodoxy. Like most things in life, we tend to think about our theology more seriously when it is being opposed or challenged. Some Christians, far from being repulsed by accounts of Mormon deity, may actually feel an uncomfortable attraction to certain Mormon concepts and be forced to admit that they may have conceived of God in Mormon terms all along! This could simply be the result of their own lack of understanding of Christian theology, their pursuit and espousal of a 'simple' faith.⁷⁴

2.2.1. LDS The New World Religion?

In a previous quote we saw Bracht classifying the Mormons as "a new world religion". Bracht amplified his point this way:

Anti-Mormon writers rarely comprehend the complexity and sophistication of Mormonism as a world faith. The Mormon doctrine of God is not the inane ramblings of some new and exotic sect whose teaching may prove to be superficial, trite, even unintelligible. If Christians are ever going to engage in meaningful dialogue with Mormons and respect Mormonism as 'no mere dissenting sect' but as a 'real religious creation, one intended to be to Christianity as Christianity was to Judaism: that is, a reform and a consummation'

then they will have to make a far more earnest attempt to assess Mormonism in the light of its appeal to the common man. So far that attempt has been very largely second-hand, courtesy of anti-Mormon polemicists.⁷⁵

What Bracht was underscoring is that in the self-consciousness of the Mormons their church is a reforming entity that not only claims to "restore" apostolic faith, but it is also believed to be the completion or fulfilment of the Christian faith. The cleavage between Christian orthodoxy and Mormon belief needs to be grasped conceptually in the same way that an orthodox Jew views the Christian faith - it is a movement that radically departs from the parent faith to the point where adherents of the parent faith cannot accept that their own beliefs have been "consummated" by the new offspring religion. The Jew does not conceive of Judaism's distinctive teachings about the Law and Prophets as being fulfilled in Christ Jesus. Often lay Christians remain puzzled as to why the Jew obstinately refuses to see the "light", especially when the New Testament's teachings about Christ fulfilling the Law and Prophets seems so obvious to the Christian.

In other words, just as a fundamental ideological break came between Jew and Christian in the first century where the two faiths developed in different directions, the analogy loosely carries over to Christian and Mormon. The Jew does not find or recognize within the Hebrew Scriptures the notion of the Trinity and does not see Jesus of Nazareth as the prophesied messiah. Christian proof-texts generally do not make much of an impression. As Christians we are confident that Jesus is indeed the messiah and the Son of God.

Now let us put ourselves in the same position as the Jew when Mormons witness to us. When the Mormon offers proof texts from the Bible for the plurality of gods we are not convinced by their arguments and (this is where the analogy breaks down) there is no evidence for it in Scripture. We are quite properly perplexed by Mormon teachings and we see good reasons for rejecting the claims of the Latter-Day Saint church to be the proper custodian of apostolic faith. The Christian understands that the faith has been once for all delivered to the church in Jesus and so nothing else can be added in.

Meanwhile the Mormon conceptualizes that revealed faith goes through history in regular cycles of apostasy and restoration. So they affirm that the apostolic faith became apostate and in God's economy had to be "restored". As apologists we find no evidence to support the Mormon claim for total apostasy nor are we persuaded that Joseph Smith was God's prophet of the restoration. Yet just as we think the Jew has failed



to see Jesus foreshadowed in the prophets, so the Mormon thinks we are failing to see the plurality of the gods in the Bible. The Jew rejects the New Testament as canonical scripture, just as Christians reject the Book of Mormon as another testament to Jesus. As there was a parting of the ways between Jew and Christian, it is also the case between Christian and Mormon. There can be no rapprochement or amalgamation between Christian and Mormon doctrinally because they are mutually exclusive theologies.

2.2.1.1. Apologetic Impact

The real problem we must face is whether we are communicating the gospel effectively with Mormons. That there is some polemical communication occurring cannot be disputed. Bracht noted:

A plethora of anti-Mormon books has served in some ways to provoke a new wave of Mormon apologetics. Christian and ex-Mormon authors such as Jerald and Sandra Tanner, Dr. Walter Martin, Latayne Colvett Scott, Gordon H. Fraser, Floyd McElveen, Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, Harry Ropp and A. A. Hoekema, have certainly exhausted Christian polemic against Mormonism aimed at the popular market. Mormons, long since adjusted to rejection, traditionally meet their critics with silence and have usually appeared uninterested in making their theology acceptable to non-Mormon theologians and critics. When pressed they accuse the critics of being ill-informed and negative in their approach. Now they are obviously under pressure from their own people to respond in self-defence. There is no question that some of the Christian polemic is having an effect.⁷⁶

We are clearly sending messages to the Mormons about our rejection of their teachings, but to what extent are we making disciples for Jesus Christ amongst the Mormons? For all of our books, tapes, tracts and videos, are we undertaking any sustained gospel preaching inside their communities? We are familiar with various para-church ministries, especially those developed on college campuses that engage in evangelism and establish small cell-groups (InterVarsity Fellowship, Navigators etc). To what extent is that activity being duplicated by orthodox Christians sharing the gospel with Mormons? Are our apologetic labors translating into substantial cell groups of former Mormons (and here I am not ignoring Ex-Mormons for Jesus)? To what extent are Mormon leaders acceding to our apologetic arguments and converting to evangelical teachings? Have we seen any Mormon

congregations convert en masse to evangelical faith? Is that a feasible expectation to have particularly in view of what occurred inside the Worldwide Church of God?⁷⁷

Parallel to the beehive activity of Christian apologists Bracht noted the rise of Mormon apologists like Diane Wirth, Duane Crowther, Joseph McConkie, Robert Millett, and Gilbert Scharffs, as well as the role of periodicals like *The Ensign* and *Dialogue*. Since Bracht wrote one might add in the collective part played by Mormon apologists through FARMS.⁷⁸

However Bracht highlighted that there is a major conceptual puzzle as to why Christians and Mormons fail to understand each other:

The Christian thinks of the Mormon doctrine of God with its characteristic finitism, materiality and polytheism, as radical and heretical, an aberration of monstrous proportions. The Mormon on the other hand, is simply bewildered that all men do not see God as he sees him. It is a bewilderment that can be read on the young zealous faces of its proselytising missionaries when their message is rejected. 'Why would anyone not want to receive it?' they seem to ask. For them, their own position is eminently rational, irrefutable, biblically-based and most natural. They wonder whether Christians really appreciate what they are defining in their historic creeds, and echo the sentiment of the Prophet-founder, that 'that which is without body, parts or passions is nothing.' They see no alternative to the God revealed by the Prophet Joseph Smith.⁷⁹

Elsewhere in his thesis Bracht emphasized the need for Christians to properly understand the fact that when challenging the Mormon doctrine of God one is also necessarily undermining the individual Mormon's own identity:

For Mormons, gods and men and angels are of the same species, not eternally separated by the transcendent and the infinite. Their whole understanding of themselves, their sense of identity, *raison d'être*, are entirely related to who and what God is and to God's stated purpose of seeking to 'bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.' When Christianity challenges the Mormon view of deity and seeks to 'expose' it, it challenges the Mormon psyche and threatens to undermine the Mormon's sense of identity and security. So much of what they are, is bound up in what He is, that it is not possible to criticize or ridicule the one, without deeply offending and wounding the other. Christians must recognize that it is possible to go on disagreeing with Mormonism theologically, while at the same time



exercising real empathy towards Mormons. Empathy rather than polemics, will not only encourage more meaningful dialogue, it will also aid Christians in sharpening their own perceptions of the faith which they espouse.⁸⁰

Bracht argued that Mormons see their faith as having evolved to the point where they insist they are "orthodox". In other words, Mormons have known what it is like to be regarded as "mad," "alien", "nonconforming" and "heterodox". Mormons experienced persecution in the nineteenth century as their numbers grew and they were dismissed as heretics by both church and society. With the passage of more than one hundred and seventy years of history, in their eyes their teachings seem to have triumphed over persecution and so they conceive of themselves as being vindicated as orthodox.⁸¹ Bracht devoted his thesis then to charting very carefully the contours of the Mormon doctrine of God. He sought to clarify Christian Trinitarian doctrine in the face of Mormon heterodoxy.

As noted above Bracht expressed deep concerns about deficiencies he saw in a lot (though not all) of popular countercult apologias directed at Mormons. His disquiet had a three-fold foundation to it: (a). What he discerned as the lack of intellectual cogency and depth in the apologetic material, (b). His dual training in orthodox Christian theology and in the discipline of religious studies and (c). Having been a Mormon and then rejecting the Latter-Day Saint faith he could appreciate how some countercult apologetic material simply misses the mark with Mormons.

2.2.1.2. More Apologetic Disquiet

Although Bracht had expressed his disquiet in 1988, it took a further decade before another candid and provocative appraisal about apologetics was widely read.⁸² In 1998 Carl Mosser and Paul Owen set the proverbial cat among the pigeons by claiming that Mormon apologists had worked out a lot of rebuttals to standard Christian arguments and that Mormon scholars had upped the ante both with the apologetic topics and the scholarship stakes.⁸³ From their initial appeal for better apologetic work has come the collaborative text *The New Mormon Challenge*.⁸⁴ It is at the moment of writing this essay too soon to assess how this text may impact in the long term on both Mormons and on other Christian apologetic projects.

The original Mosser-Owen discussion has elicited a wide variety of comments in the AR-Forum/AR-Talk electronic discussion board.

Comments have ranged from a misperception that Mosser & Owen see apologetics as an academics-only domain; that academic apologetics fails to connect with lay Christians; and mystification on the part of a few who seem astonished that anyone would even question existing anti-Mormon apologetic literature. This defensive reaction to critical discussions about apologetic method and argument is brimming with irony: Some apologists can deliver biting and even scathing criticisms of other beliefs, and yet apologists can react so defensively when subjected to peer review. Such sensitivity may be analogous to the proverbial "school bully" who can be mean to others but whimpers when treated in like manner.

On a different level two apologists have acknowledged that Mosser and Owen raised some issues that need addressing. However these apologists maintain that things might be "not quite so alarming".⁸⁵ They contend that as it has already been proven in print from Scripture and history that Mormonism is a false religion, much of what has already been written should be retained and used in witness.⁸⁶ They are non-plussed as to how anyone could in the face of that evidence still maintain a rational commitment to the Latter-Day Saint Church. So they opine that it is inconceivable "there can be important scholarly arguments in defense of myths."⁸⁷

This latter remark about the improbable defense of myths signifies two drawbacks in over-relying on the heresy-rationalist model. One is that apologists may be underestimating the purpose and function of myth in both the life of a devotee as well as in understanding its importance in the world's religions generally. The other is the rationalist expectation that the debunking of false doctrines is sufficient for cult devotees to see the error of their ways.

As the heresy-rationalist model is generally concentrated in doctrinal analysis, the conceptual significance of myth in new religions generally - and in this instance Mormon teaching - can be overlooked or downplayed. Yet this is like two ships passing one another in a fog, where the impact of the apologist's case can fail in its intended objective to engage and challenge the devotee. The apologist may assume that a cult devotee bases his or her beliefs in what appears to be a rationally constructed system and that devotees therefore seek to act logically in accordance with those beliefs. So the apologist's argument offers reasons why those beliefs are heretical and not rational. This is the juncture where an apologist's case can misfire by not grasping what mythological thought entails.



Again space limitations preclude any detailed exposition here, but a few summary remarks can be made. Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe have discussed the importance of mythological thinking in new religions. They define myth as:

a story with culturally formative power. This definition emphasizes that a myth is essentially a story - any story - that affects the way people live. Contrary to many writers, we do not believe that a myth is necessarily unhistorical. In itself a story that becomes a myth can be true or false, historical or unhistorical, fact or fiction. What is important is not the story itself but the *function* it serves in the life of an individual, a group, or a whole society. Myths are stories that serve specific social functions. They enable members of different societies and subgroups within societies to understand themselves and their world.⁸⁸

Hexham and Poewe point out that what matters most is not so much the content of the myth but the way it is used by believers to explain the past, present and future, and how it gives a framework for meaning to life. They have illustrated how Mormon thought is definitely grounded in a number of disparate myths or sacred stories. These include:

- (1). Healing myths as expressed in the word of wisdom, the laying on of hands and that priesthood authority can produce spiritual healing.⁸⁹
- (2). Doom myths that goad Mormons into stockpiling emergency food supplies.⁹⁰
- (3). Lost civilization myths as reflected in the Book of Mormon stories about ancient America.⁹¹
- (4). The concept or doctrine of eternal progression operates out of nineteenth century evolutionary myths.⁹²

What apologists may not initially appreciate then is that despite offering careful biblical refutations of the doctrine of the plurality of the gods, the full impact of such argumentation can miss the mark with a Mormon simply because the Mormon is operating on a mythological basis rather than a doctrinal one. Hexham and Poewe note "the idea of evolution gives Mormon theology its essential unity by providing Mormon beliefs with an all-embracing operating system."⁹³ The heresy-rationalist model has not enabled practitioners to recognize or comprehend mythological thinking. It is constrained by the agenda to provide doctrinal refutations from scripture as well as logical refutations of what are seen as irrational

beliefs. These arguments may indeed be very sound, but for purposes of effective and penetrating communication simply fail to have the desired effect. In other words apologists are good at knocking down false doctrine, but this very act of analysis presupposes that all cults proclaim beliefs doctrinally. What apologists are overlooking is that religious beliefs may be fundamentally conceived of and expressed mythically rather than in any systematic set of doctrines.

The apologist expects his or her arguments to be comprehended by the Mormon. The Mormon in considering the weight of such analysis is then expected to realize there is no longer any credible basis to continue believing in Joseph Smith's prophetic credentials. The difficulty here is that no matter how proficient the apologist is in biblical doctrines, epistemology, metaphysics and logic, the Mormon is probably functioning mythologically. The Mormon to be sure believes the foundational stories in the Book of Mormon and about Joseph Smith's visions are historically true, but these stories have morphed into overarching myths. Mythical thinking, particularly as manifested in post-Enlightenment times, often draws on fragments of various myths. A rigorous epistemological and logical dissection of these fragments may very easily show up defects, inconsistencies and falsehood. Yet if the apologist does not appreciate the power of a myth to shape the life, thought and culture in which a devotee lives, then his or her apologia will often fall on deaf ears no matter how cogent the technical philosophical analysis.

2.2.1.3. LDS as a Culture

Some apologists have expressed similar disquiet over the stance taken in the Salt Lake Theological Seminary's training program called "*Bridges*", where the Mormons are viewed as a "culture" rather than a cult. The alarm seems to be grounded over the dropping of the word "cult" and the apparent shift from the familiar confrontational apologetic approach over to a missionary model of outreach in the training program. It is not my place here to review the "*Bridges*" program, but readers can peruse John Morehead's profile of it in *Sacred Tribes*.⁹⁴

The apparent resistance to using the word "culture" rather than "cult" is presumably grounded in the view that Mormon belief is heretical. With that view firmly entrenched the proposal to reframe the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as a culture simply does not make sense. It is precisely at this juncture where Ralph Neighbour's remarks need re-echoing: "we never tried it that way before". Apologists who are not conversant with missiology will deem the proposal an implausible exercise. There is also a widespread misnomer that mission is unnecessary in nominally Christian countries. So a bifurcation may exist



in the minds of some apologists that artificially divides mission from apologetics. It may be then that some practitioners are convinced that apologetics is the only tool one uses to handle cults, while mission tools are reserved for the 10/40 window of unreached tribes. So the agenda of "*Bridges*" is susceptible to being misconstrued by those who do not recognize or believe that religious pluralism in the West necessarily demands that we treat the homeland in the exact same way a missionary approaches the unreached tribes overseas.

At this juncture space limitations preclude any lengthy examination of the proposal that the Latter-Day Saints constitute a distinct culture. However a few summary points should be noted here. First, Latter-Day Saints beliefs are not merely derivative from the doctrinal pool of Protestant thought. That is to say they cannot be simply understood as being just heretical distortions of orthodox Protestant doctrine. Although Christian vocabulary has been scooped up and redefined, and even though the Latter-Day Saints assert their church is Christian, it is quite legitimate to consider them as an entirely new religion and by extension a culture.

As was suggested before, the analogy of the Mormons as a distinct new religion can be compared with Judaism and Christianity. Both Jews and Christians use the Hebrew Scriptures, yet what the Jew and the Christian understand from the same biblical texts is often very different. Christianity is not a Jewish heresy but an entirely different religion that draws upon elements that overlap both religions. In this same way, the Mormons do refer to the Bible but have created a completely different religion that is utterly unrecognizable to the orthodox Christian believer. Elements of the Apocrypha also appear to be reflected within some passages of the Book of Mormon. All of these thought forms, beliefs and myths give shape to a culture inhabited by the Mormon believer.

We might also ponder on the rationalist Deism of the late eighteenth century that undermined confidence in miracles and the Bible. Joseph Smith emerged as a prophet at a time when scepticism and early biblical criticism cast doubt on the Bible's trustworthiness. American founding fathers such as Washington, Jefferson, Paine and Franklin were all Deists who claimed the Bible was contradictory and erroneous. Smith offered a direct revelation from God as well as from other allegedly ancient texts. Smith's revelatory gambit enabled many to by-pass these negative Deist doubts. It also supplanted the need for adopting conservative Protestant interpretations of the Bible people had already deemed to be untenable.⁹⁵

John L. Brooke has charted some of the esoteric currents that emanated from Renaissance Europe and took root in North-Eastern America in colonial times.⁹⁶ Brooke's work shows that an intellectual subterranean current of esoteric thought and practice formed an integral part of the matrix from which Mormon teaching developed. These elements derive from the hermeticists, Masons, Rosicrucians and alchemical thought but did not develop or spread through some carefully crafted conspiracy. The doctrinal heritage of Mormons owes quite a significant debt to the magus-based esoteric traditions of Europe. The magus traditions developed parallel to the church but never pretended to be new denominations of Christianity. These esoteric components, combined with the Protestant traditions, yield a movement we cannot simply pigeonhole as a heresy. It is more than a heresy - it is a distinct religion in its own right. As a distinct religion it has its own cosmology, sacred myths, customs and traditions, vocabulary and cuisine. These are some of the elements that go to making up a culture.

Secondly, the Latter-Day Saints have a clear identity about the fundamental message and role of their church that demarcates them from all other denominational expressions of Christianity. They refer to themselves as Zion and all non-Mormons are Gentiles, and this sort of self-understanding is what one expects of a people group or culture. Their message about the restored church completely differs from the Reformational perspective of ecclesiology. For the Mormons American geography is the sphere of divine activity. This is embedded in their psyche by the alleged events reported in the Book of Mormon, as well as by the calling of an American to be the prophet of restoration. It was reinforced by the cross-country pilgrimage Brigham Young led to Utah where the Saints settled and carved out a distinct pioneer culture before joining the Union. We must also recall the early eschatological theology the church had about the worldwide in gathering of the saints to Zion. So it ought to be clear that Mormon theology is peculiarly linked into the fabric of American culture. Adam has been Americanized.⁹⁷

Thirdly, the Latter-Day Saints have developed their own celebratory festivals and these perform a cultural function for those who belong to the church. The annual pageant associated with the Hill Cumorah is a case in point. This site is where Joseph Smith claimed he found the golden plates, which were translated into the Book of Mormon. For the faithful this is a sacred site. The pageant serves as a focal point to reinforce for the faithful the places and events they regard with paramount significance. Festivals are cultural signifiers both to those who belong and those who do not, that there is an alternative community here with a unique message, distinct customs and practices. Other



cultural components include the development of fictional literature for the faithful, adherence to the "word of wisdom" revelation that forbids tea, coffee etc, the grass roots interest in naturopathic healing techniques, and their emphasis on thriftiness and self-sufficiency so as to avoid relying on the secular gentile community.

If we accept the metaphor of "culture" as applying to the Mormons, then the call to revise our apologetic approach from mere "extraction evangelism" over to "contextual mission" might begin to make more sense.⁹⁸ Furthermore it might help us to see that debunking heresies does not always translate into evangelistic outreach and that where such outreach is lacking or failing then contextual mission approaches might rectify this.

2.2.2. Anti-Mormon Apologetic Cul-de-Sacs

Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that some arguments or apologetic ploys used by Christians to convince Mormons have been disastrous and in some cases even back-fired.

2.2.2.1. The God Makers

Both the book and film entitled "*The God Makers*" have been used to inform Christians and to challenge Mormons about their unbiblical beliefs. It is undeniable that the film in particular caused considerable disturbance in Mormon circles and some have jettisoned their commitment to the Latter-Day Saint faith. However the growth of the Latter-Day Saint church has not diminished, even though the film has been widely distributed throughout the English-speaking world. Some Christian apologists have criticized the film for being inaccurate, distorted and sensationalist. The late Christian apologist Wally Tope faulted the film as follows:

- (1). The men who appear near the beginning of the film telling their stories as survivors from Mormonism (one who nearly suicided; the other whose children are against him) were actually actors. Yet the film nowhere signifies to the viewing audience that this is the case. Tope regarded this as utterly unethical.
- (2). The film's narrative is overloaded with sensationalist claims that have no factual basis in primary source evidence (such as the alleged role of Joseph Smith at the Last Judgment).
- (3). The film overstates its negative case and is exaggerated in its effort to elicit emotional responses of outrage and hostility towards the Mormon faith.

(4). It is dubious to claim that the name "Mormon" has any linguistic relationship or historical connection with the Cantonese word "gates of hell".

(5). Anton La Vey's *Satanic Bible* is cited in the film to prove that those who follow the god "Mormo" must be named "Mormons". However there are manifold problems in relying on La Vey's book beyond what even Tope himself adduces. First, the *Satanic Bible* is not an authoritative scripture concerned with Devil worship or demons. It is not a revelation from Satan and does not purport to contain the words of the Devil at all. Neither is it a grimoire of secret incantations one can use to practice black magic and make demons do your bidding. Satanists have yet to come and say they regard La Vey's book as being parallel in authority to the Christian view of the Old and New Testament. The term Satanist, as used in the *Satanic Bible*, refers to someone who espouses a hedonist lifestyle and conscientiously rejects the herd mentality of both popular culture and all religious movements. To be a Satanist on this definition means that one is opposed to following the crowd, and the word Satanist is used in a provocative way to express opposition to the chief religious expression of western culture namely Christianity. These Satanists are by self-definition humanists and therefore do not believe in worshipping anybody. La Vey was an atheist who did not believe in the existence of either God or Satan. La Vey's philosophy was largely derived from humanist and atheist philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Ayn Rand, the decadent magus Aleister Crowley and the pseudonymous anarchist known as Ragnar Redbeard. Second, substantial parts of the *Satanic Bible* were plagiarized from Redbeard's *Might Is Right*, and it in turn is based on Nietzsche and evolutionary concepts of Caucasian racial superiority.⁹⁹ Third, there is simply no proven connection between the figure "Mormo" and Mormons. Dubious reasoning is used to make equivalences between materials where no such connection can be validly made.

(6). The film is lacking in any substantial biblical critique, with very few bible passages quoted or expounded.¹⁰⁰

As the film suffers from these serious drawbacks it does the cause of Christ no good. Even though some people have become apostates after viewing the film, we cannot legitimate the enterprise by following Lenin's maxim that the end justifies the means. Moreover, Mormon apologists such as Gilbert Scharffs and Robert & Rosemary Brown have provided some competent rebuttals to the film and book.¹⁰¹

2.2.2.2. *The Spaulding Thesis*



Another highly problematic case was the attempt in the late 1970s to show that the Book of Mormon was plagiarized from an unpublished novel by Solomon Spaulding.¹⁰² Philastus Hurlbut and E. D. Howe originally promulgated the claim about the Book of Mormon deriving from a manuscript by Solomon Spaulding in the nineteenth century. A trio of modern Christian researchers claimed that within the Latter-Day Saint Church's historical archives was a six-page hand written manuscript of the Book of Mormon by an unknown scribe and that the handwriting was Spaulding's. The researchers brought in handwriting specialists to compare samples of Spaulding's handwriting with that of the "unknown scribe".

However the case collapsed on various counts:

(1). The handwriting experts who inspected the documents in question reached mutually exclusive conclusions, and found themselves at odds with the Christian researchers.¹⁰³

(2). Christian apologists Jerald and Sandra Tanner published a useful critique of the entire Spaulding thesis adducing sound reasons for ditching the whole enterprise. They saw good reasons to suspect the motives of Philastus Hurlbut who was excommunicated from the Latter-Day Saints. Hurlbut may very well have fabricated a hoax concerning Spaulding as the alleged author of the Book of Mormon.¹⁰⁴

(3). Mormon apologists Robert and Rosemary Brown brought in a thoroughly damning verdict against the Spaulding thesis, as well as undermining the claims of one of the Christian researchers who said he was a direct descendant of the prominent Mormon leader Oliver Cowdery but the evidence clearly does not support this.¹⁰⁵

The fundamental lesson to be drawn here is that the cause of Christ cannot be served with unethical claims and unsound arguments. To be sure not all countercult apologists have pursued these apologetic cul-de-sacs. In view of the urge (particularly on the part of lay apologists and ex-devotees) to publish on the Internet or release videos, it would be prudent for unusual or innovative enterprises to be submitted to a spectrum of apologists and scholars for sober peer review before releasing the material for public consumption.

Of course making such a suggestion may touch some raw nerves. To what extent do we prefer to act like the Lone Ranger? Does ministry-empire-building take precedence over co-operation with colleagues in other ministries? Are western apologists unwittingly caught up in the

rugged individualist myths so beloved in frontier nations like Australia, New Zealand and the USA? Could we even be unconsciously caught up in a competitive tussle to find out who is the next "Walter Martin"? If we reach the stage where we thoroughly believe everything we put into our press releases we could be losing the plot. If our self-bestowed claims to expertise matter the most then we are bound to be more ego-driven than motivated by authentic servanthood.

2.3. Problem of Reification

In heresy-rationalist apologias we operate on the basis that devotees of new religions are followers and promulgators of false doctrine. We therefore seek to demolish false doctrine and we seem to assume that once true doctrines are explained that repentance, faith and discipleship are viable options for devotees. Now the identification and refutation of false doctrine has a long pedigree starting from the Bible and continuing on throughout church history. Although with the benefit of hindsight we cannot help but eschew the harsh and sometimes brutal treatment of heretics in past times, the discernment of theological error is nonetheless vital.¹⁰⁶ Christians stand or fall on their commitment to the biblical and creedal verities concerning the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Harold O. J. Brown correctly observes:

Faith makes a Christian, but doctrine creates the church. It is possible for a church to endure long without a clear doctrinal base, or even in reaction to its earlier doctrinal base, but a church in our sense would not arise at all unless clear and significant doctrines were present. Although he may not think of it as "dogma" or refer to it as "doctrine" no one can be a Christian at all unless he accepts the truth of certain fundamental statements we usually call dogmas.¹⁰⁷

Now with that foundation being acknowledged and upheld as non-negotiable truth, we nonetheless need to be alert to a potential trap when studying other faiths. It is a point that has been ably raised by J. Gordon Melton. Quite a few evangelical apologists hold some strenuous objections about Melton's activities and views. However, it would indeed be a very narrow position to maintain that anything he says can be dismissed at the outset. This is not to say that his views are exempt from critical scrutiny. Rather we must beware of the fallacy of *ad hominem* argumentation and assiduously avoid becoming so narrow-minded that we are able to peer through a keyhole with both eyes simultaneously.¹⁰⁸

Melton has pointed to one of the limitations in relying exclusively on doctrinal analyses as the basis for understanding new religions. Melton has observed, "an approach which emphasizes ideas frequently misses the essence and appeal of a group."¹⁰⁹ The problem Melton points to is



one that was initially identified by Marxist scholars in the field of sociology, namely the problem of reification. Reification occurs when the interpretation of an abstract concept (like the state) is turned into a concrete reality, it is where one mistakes language about reality with reality itself.¹¹⁰ Reification is a particular hazard one has to be alert to in the study of religion generally, and especially when writing abstractly about them. The abstract portrait of what we might believe a particular religion is all about may not always correspond to what people actually believe and practice. An ever present problem on the horizon for us all is that we run the risk of thinking that a religion can be understood from the comfort of one's armchair simply through reading books by or about a particular group, and then extracting from that mass of written data what we think is the ideological or theological core. Whilst we must necessarily refer to the scriptures, commentaries and the corpus of literature produced within a religious tradition, religion is a much more complex phenomena than some of us might properly appreciate.

If we stay for a moment within the familiar terrain of evangelical churches, we know what we believe and why we believe it. However we generally feel that outsiders cannot properly comprehend our Christian faith merely by reading a creed, confessional document or monograph in systematic theology. Our faith involves a vibrant relationship with God in Christ, as well as relationships with other believers in the context of a local community or congregation. We participate in a spectrum of rites, ceremonies and forms of worship in our church services. We practice our faith on a daily basis regulated through our experiences of prayer, praise, reading the Bible, and integrating into the routines of urban or rural life the scriptural precepts of Jesus, the apostles and the prophets. Our faith includes cognitive elements of articulated teachings, but also incorporates important non-cognitive, experiential and subjective elements. It is also the case that as evangelicals we inhabit particular sub-cultures that are shaped not only by denominational allegiances but also by geographical and cultural factors (e.g. consider the shades of differences just between Baptists in Dallas, London and Sydney).

An observer who merely reads about our faith will not necessarily understand the subtle experiential dynamics of what it is to have faith in Jesus Christ and to abide by his teachings. Moreover, when we reflect on the diversity of our denominations we discover theological nuances that lead to certain emphases on core doctrines and to the spiritual habits of parishioners (e.g. the Reformed emphasis on covenantal theology, or the Pentecostal emphases on the Holy Spirit). Add to this the subtle

emphases that arise between the denominations over the interpretation of passages of scripture - the discipline of hermeneutics and exegesis - and we recognize that to understand Christianity through the eyes of a believer is not necessarily a simple task that can be accomplished through reading a few books. An observer is surely not prohibited per se from metaphorically trying to wear our moccasins, and the act of empathic understanding is something to be applauded and emulated.

2.3.1. A Hypothetical Case of a Buddhist Apologist on Evangelicalism

Take it a step further. Suppose a Buddhist apologist sought to analyze evangelical beliefs, and charted our doctrines according to the categories of Buddhist belief: dukkha, tanha, nirodha, magga, anicca, anatta, nirvana etc. The resulting portrait would be a strange one indeed precisely because the principle teachings of Buddhism address different questions, conceive of reality in a vastly different way, and operates under a different "cultural logic" from those we find in say the Westminster Confession or the Lausanne Covenant.¹¹¹

Now the same basic issue holds true for evangelical apologists who observe any non-Christian faith, including the new religions. If we intuit that an outsider will not have an adequate or comprehensive appreciation for what it is to be an evangelical Christian simply by reading doctrinal statements, or as in the hypothetical Buddhist's chart of doctrinal comparisons, then we too must realize there are implications for the way we narrowly seek to understand any non-Christian faith. It is not enough for us to draw up a chart of what a non-Christian group is deemed to believe, especially when the criterion for classifying dogmas is organized on the sole basis of abstract contrasts with orthodox Christianity.

2.3.1.1. Ernst Benz on Understanding Religions

The issue of reification, which as we have seen can occur when we interpret a religion primarily on the basis of doctrines, was brought into perspective in the life experiences of the late Ernst Benz. He was professor of church history and historical theology at the University of Marburg, Germany, and stood outside the evangelical tradition in his own theological commitments. Benz had the cross-cultural experience of lecturing about Christian history and theology in India, Burma, Thailand and Japan. In a scholarly colloquium dedicated to methodological issues on the study of religion, Benz commented on his cross-cultural experiences as a European lecturing about Christianity in Asian contexts, and then reflected on how he understood non-Christian religions.¹¹²

Benz came to the realization how his own Western presuppositions affected the way he understood other religions. He made these foundational remarks:



Our scientific-critical thinking, our total experience of life, our emotional and volitional ways of reaction, are strongly shaped by our specific Christian presuppositions and Western ways of thought and life. This is true even as regards the pseudo-forms, and secularized forms of thought and life, which are antithetical to the claims of Christianity. Indeed, we are frequently, in most cases even totally, unconscious of these presuppositions.¹¹³

From this platform Benz then offered the following illustration:

Our Western Christian thinking is qualified in its deepest philosophical and methodological ideas by a personalistic idea of God. This concept makes it particularly difficult to understand the fundamental disposition of Buddhism, which knows of no personalistic idea of God. The traditional Western reaction, in Christian theology as well as in Western philosophy, is to characterize Buddhist theology as "atheistic". It is difficult for a Westerner to comprehend the specifically Buddhist form of the approach to the transcendent. As for me, I had theoretical knowledge from my acquaintance with Buddhist literature, of the non-theistic tenets of Buddhism. But it became clear to me only when attending Buddhist "worship services" or in conversation with Buddhist priests and lay people. It is difficult for us to understand the non-theistic notion of Buddhism because the personalistic idea of God plays such a fundamental part in our Western logic. It took constant effort and new trials on my part to realize that the basic difference between the two is not one of abstract theological concepts. It goes deeper than that, because this particular form of expression is attained by a certain training in meditation. It is here that the experience of the transcendent is cultivated and secured for the total life of Buddhism.¹¹⁴

Benz also highlighted the problem of interpreting Asian religions from the standpoint of Christian doctrine:

Another basic assumption which we hold as part of our Western Christian thinking is the common preference we attribute to theology, the doctrinal part of religion, when it comes to the interpretation of the forms of religious expression. But this preference is a specific sign of Christianity, especially Western Christianity of the Protestant variety. Whenever this viewpoint has

been applied to the critical examination of Asiatic religions, an emphasis on their didactic and doctrinal elements has resulted. Thus, in interpreting Buddhism and Hinduism, some Western authors have placed undue stress on their teachings and philosophy. I myself was extremely surprised to find that in contemporary Buddhism, a much more central role is played by its liturgical and cultic elements.¹¹⁵

In his closing reflections Benz presented this cautionary advice:

The Western Christian also must beware of transferring to the Eastern religions his own ideas concerning the organization of religion. We always assume more or less consciously the ecclesiastical model of Christianity when analyzing other religions. This approach suits neither Hinduism nor Buddhism nor Shintoism. The Japanese Buddhists do not form a Buddhist "church" It would be equally misleading to apply to Eastern religions the idea that a person can be a member of only one religious community. This is a notion which stems specifically from confessional Christianity. It does not apply to Japan, nor to China, where in the life of the individual Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism mix and interpenetrate, as Shintoism and Buddhism do in Japan.¹¹⁶

Although we evangelicals could not in all clear conscience follow the theological pathway that Benz did, we should not dismiss the lessons he learned. What Benz discovered is that his own Western background together with his Christian theological assumptions had powerfully shaped his theoretical knowledge and impressions of Asiatic religions. He correctly understood that Christianity and Buddhism are fundamentally different faiths. However he found it very difficult to really grasp the Buddhist's view of the transcendent simply because his own belief in a personal God shaped his expectations of what he could not find inside Buddhism. He realized that distilling the essence of Buddhism into predetermined western categories of philosophy and theology left much to be desired. He came to appreciate the prominent place of the experiential such as the discipline of meditation as core expressions of Buddhist faith.

In looking at his observations, we might begin to ponder how pertinent Benz's remarks are in connection with our own analyses of world religions and new religious movements. Do we accurately represent and understand non-Christian religions in our literature? As we are so keen to prove that their teachings are incompatible with the gospel, could it be that what we write at times fails to reflect any depth understanding of what it means for a devotee or adherent to follow and believe and practice what they do? If what we have written is more of an artificial



construct than a true representation of another religion, then maybe we are in danger of creating bogeymen. We may need to undertake more rigorous work in learning and understanding the views of those we disagree with. If we cannot exercise care and precision in our groundwork of fact-finding and comprehension, then we ought not to be surprised that adherents of other faiths have little respect for both our message and ourselves as messengers.

2.3.2. *The Problem With “Isms”*

So our portraits of a particular non-Christian faith may be at times so skewed to the point where they are utterly unrecognizable to a devotee. To be sure we will glean some information as to why our beliefs and theirs differ but what we assemble at times can scarcely be dignified with the word *understanding*. What we need to appreciate then is the cultural context and background in which new religions arise and how they transform pre-existing ideas, stories or beliefs in these contexts. The frontiers they inhabit operate on entirely different bases from those we live by inside the church. That is one reason why it is a mistake to assume that a new religion is simply departing from Christian orthodoxy. One can certainly find such deviations from orthodoxy in groups like Jehovah's Witnesses and Christadelphians, but it is not the case when dealing with followers of Osho, Muktananda, and the New Age. In many instances new religions do not originate from nor see themselves as being custodians of apostolic belief. So our fondness for designating new religions as *isms* needs some critical reflection.

Eric Sharpe (1933-2000) was renowned for addressing questions of method in religious studies.¹¹⁷ Sharpe sought to alert students to the cul-de-sac of regarding an *ism* as a reality:

A religion is commonly held to be in more or less the sense in which Durkheim used the word) a particular body of beliefs and practices, sufficiently well defined to be capable of carrying (in German) the suffix *-ismus* or (in English) the suffix *-ism*. Hence we have all those hordes of religious, ideological and philosophical *-isms* the existence of which has, one sometimes felt, been a dreadful barrier to clear thinking on our subject. Perhaps they are only conceptualizations; perhaps we can hardly do without them. But often they are sadly misleading. *Buddhism* is a usable term, because of its reference to the experience and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, *the Buddha* (the Enlightened One); *Hinduism*, on the other hand, refers neither to an individual teacher

nor to a single accepted body of teachings, but rather to a geographical area and its inhabitants, whose religious beliefs and practices may be of the most diverse kinds. And to say "Hinduism is a religion" may (and often does) betray a total misunderstanding of the Hindu mind, creating as it does a conceptual straitjacket within which actual Hindus are often unable to move. Many other "isms" are equally misleading (animism, fetishism, totemism are cases in point), simply because they appear to impose rigid limits on highly flexible groups of phenomena.¹¹⁸

Robert Minor, who is professor of religious studies at the University of Kansas, reiterated the problem of the "isms" and reification for evangelicals in 1976:

They are categories that become reified, giving those who dabble in world religions the feeling that, once they have found out what the five essential doctrines of each "ism" are, they then understand the religions of the world. Such an approach, I would suggest, results in misunderstanding what the various followers think. When the one who desires first to understand others treats the category of "Hinduism" as a reified entity, he ignores the disagreements held on every point of doctrine among the followers of religions that are usually grouped under the term "Hinduism." The same can be said for the reification of all the isms.¹¹⁹

Sharpe clinched the problem this way:

A religion, in other words, whether or not it is called an "ism" is an intellectual construction, a device through which the rationalist passion for classifying and pigeonholing expresses itself. Religion (without the article) has come to denote more or less the genus of which the various individual religions are considered to be species. In one sense, it is an abstract noun; in another, it is a collective noun.¹²⁰

The overall problem with the "isms" then is that by isolating doctrines from culture and daily life we become reductionists who create a distorted picture of the religion under examination. Terry Muck, who teaches about world religions at Asbury Seminary, has warned about the hazards of reducing the study of religion down to just one aspect or working exclusively with just one method of study. Muck states:

Put simply, reductionists say that the aspect of religion they choose to study is the only one, and that once religion is explained in psychological, sociological, philosophical, or some other terms, there



is nothing more to it. Thus, Sigmund Freud, who claimed religion is nothing more than infantile dependency feelings to be outgrown as humankind matures, was a reductionist. Religion to him was exhausted by the psychological behavior religious people displayed.¹²¹

We can easily detect those tendencies in sceptics who attempt to debunk or explain away the verities of our faith. The trick though is for us to be conscious about whether we are exhibiting similar tendencies when we construct our profiles of new religious movements. We really do need to be conscious of how our evangelical forebears eagerly embraced many of the critical tools of the Enlightenment, and then to be able to detect how much of that has been bequeathed to us.¹²² We must confront in ourselves the extent to which our models are grounded biblically and how they also mirror the paradigm of the Enlightenment.¹²³

2.3.3. *Evangelicals and Static Thinking*

Irving Hexham, who is both professor of religious studies at the University of Calgary and an evangelical Anglican, knows what it is to be both a follower of Christ and also being a trained scholar of other faiths. He raises the question about evangelicals being caught up in static thought whilst missing the subtle nuances in the dynamics of religious experience and change:

Many evangelicals find it easy to detect heresy and sense unorthodox beliefs. Few know how to deal with a dynamic religious situation or cope with religious change. Christians are generally conditioned to think in static theological categories. Truth is unchanging and therefore Christians are proud of their ability to present a clearly defined message to the world as well as their ability to detect error and refute it. Theologically, it is important to articulate one's faith and to be able to show its continuity with Christians throughout the ages. Unfortunately, theological precision can be used to justify indifference to people and thus becomes a dead orthodoxy. In dealing with members of new religious movements, Christians need to develop tools which will enable them to maintain their insistence on truth, while at the same time appreciating the slowness with which religious beliefs change and the ways in which God guides the lives of individuals according to their personal needs. In meeting members of new religious organizations or older sectarian movements, Christians need to develop sensitivity to distinguish between a real search for truth and the false doctrines which many

come to accept while searching for God. Instead of being surprised by the fervor with which false beliefs are held by the searcher, Christians ought to expect this to happen. St. Paul, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Augustine, the one time heretic, and Luther, the zealous monk, are but three examples of great Christian leaders who came to Christ after first committing themselves passionately to false doctrines.¹²⁴

Unfortunately, Hexham's essay does not appear to have been discussed in other books or articles and so his critical insights have gone unnoticed.

2.3.4. Bussell's Thesis

In addition to Hexham's thoughts about developing an appreciation for the wider dynamics of religious commitment, we need to build on and incorporate into our own work the insights of Harold Bussell. In a gem of a book released in 1983, Bussell presented an argument whose full import has still yet to be properly understood.¹²⁵ Bussell maintained that one of the main reasons why evangelicals are often drawn into membership in the new religions has a lot to do with lifestyle questions rather than doctrine. He identified at least six broad factors in evangelical vulnerability:

- (1). Evangelicals place too much emphasis on subjective experiences over against doctrine.
- (2). Evangelicals misconstrue their subjective response to the gospel with the content of the gospel.
- (3). Evangelicals often justify actions on the basis of a suspect piety, with remarks like "the Lord led me."
- (4). Evangelicals are very responsive to a pastor or teacher whose personal charm or charisma emotionally sways the audience, and leaders are often evaluated on those grounds.
- (5). Evangelicals can have unrealistic expectations about what Christian gatherings ought to provide.
- (6). Evangelicals at a lay level have not been trained in the art of how to think critically.

Bussell believed that on these six counts new religions excel in catering to these needs and expectations. Now the heresy-rationalist contributions on sound doctrine and critical thinking surely help here as part of the remedy. However, we need to recognize that doctrinal analysis alone is insufficient. If people are attracted to new religions on non-doctrinal grounds, then we must not ignore these sociological factors. We will want to look at ways in which biblical teaching on ecclesiology, spiritual maturity and practice can be fostered yet being careful not to exacerbate the problems Bussell identified. Of course we might also want to deepen



or broaden the menu to include other dynamics than those that Bussell has devised with due consideration to our own cultural contexts.

2.4. *Ad Hominem Arguments*

A different sort of problem that sometimes besets and even detracts from the heresy-rationalist genre concerns the criticisms some apologists make about the personality and deeds of prophets and gurus in the new religions.¹²⁶ The problem is the extent to which criticisms made against a person's character constitutes a legitimate point of argumentation. In philosophical terms an argumentative attack on a person's character is regarded as a logical fallacy known as *ad hominem* (attacking the person, rather than addressing the specific claims made by a person). Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks bring this clarity to the issue:

“This is argument by character assassination. ‘Reject whatever he says because he is a bad person.’ Literally, the fallacy's name means ‘argument against the man.’ It is not an attack on the *proposition*, but against the *person*.”¹²⁷

Geisler and Brooks indicate that a variant form of this fallacy - which they label *argumentum ad hominem circumstantial* - is not an assault on the man's character, but on some special circumstances surrounding him.¹²⁸ They offer this basic illustration:

Why should we believe Solomon when he tells us to be satisfied with ‘the wife of your youth’ (Prov. 5:18)? He wasn't. Here it is seen as *inconsistent* for Solomon to be giving advice on marriage when he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Isn't it nice to know that God uses imperfect people? Who would know the problems of marital infidelity better than Solomon? Besides, if all the writers of Scripture had to be perfect, we would have no Bible! Paul and Moses were murderers, Matthew was a tax-gatherer, and Peter had denied the Lord, but God used them all. The circumstances may seem inconsistent, but that does not change the truth of the propositions they uttered. The objection is irrelevant.¹²⁹

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe highlighted the problem of *ad hominem* argument in their initial analysis of Walter Martin's monographs:

Even if everything Martin said about the personal lives of some founders of contemporary religions were true, this would not prove their teachings wrong. He indulged in what philosophers call *ad*

hominem arguments, which are directed against the person rather than the person's ideas.¹³⁰

Hexham and Poewe felt that Martin's criticism about Charles Taze Russell's divorce was rather ironic in view of Martin's own personal difficulties.¹³¹ They felt this was a case of the pot calling the kettle black. Whether one agrees with them or not, the lesson for us is surely that if we propose to attack the personal integrity of cult leaders we ought to ensure that we are squeaky clean. For as we seek to excoriate the scandals or ethical compromises of others, we can rest assured that participants in new religions can easily repay us in kind. If we feel that exposing scandals will convince people that the guru or prophet is false, we must recognize the implicit risk we take because the public at large, whether rightly or wrongly, will draw the same conclusion about Christianity on the basis of the publicly exposed sins of priests, pastors and apologists.

A different trajectory to explicit *ad hominem* attacks can be detected in gratuitous general slurs made about non-Christian belief systems. Sadly, two evangelical philosophers whom I respect appear to have done this just in passing through the name they give to a non-Christian character. In their book they present a hypothetical dialogue over new age beliefs between a Christian called Freddy Fundamentalist and a non-Christian lady named "Nancy Newage (rhymes with "sewage")."¹³² If we find that latter epithet funny then we are fast becoming desensitized to the fact that non-Christian devotees are individual persons made in God's image.

If we start seriously exploring the reasons why people are delving into new age spirituality rather than the church, we might start squirming in our seats. John Drane has repeatedly emphasized that new age spirituality challenges the church in issues where biblical truth is neglected.¹³³ It might be very disturbing for us to discover that new age spirituality is tackling issues and meeting needs where the Bible speaks but the church is largely silent. Perhaps instead of seeing "sewage" we might find ourselves humbled and chastened for our spiritual neglect.

Suppose this hypothetical conversation was conceived from a new age outlook - how would we react to a name switch like "Oprah Newage Really-Works" and "Eva Effluent Evangeline"? Most likely we would feel offended. If we would resent that then why would we, in the name of Christ Jesus, do this to others? "Newage rhymes with sewage" is a gratuitous slur that detracts from a work that otherwise furnishes some keen philosophical critique. It is not very winsome at all. Yes the Cross of Christ does offend, but Christ's messengers need not be offensive as the bearers of that message.



Many years ago James Sire penned some sobering words about our attitudes that still ring true today:

A siege mentality is at work. Those who hold cultic ideas are seen as the enemy, the great threat to humanity, to Christians - even, some seem to suggest, to God himself. So in response anything goes: innuendo, name-calling, back-handed remarks, assumption of the worst motives on the part of cult believers. And thus the Christian dehumanizes the enemy and shoots him like a dog. But the Christian in this process is himself dehumanized.¹³⁴

2.4.1. *Gurus in the Dock?*

A sub-set to the issue of *ad hominem* attacks concerns a well-known legal precedent about the character of a witness in court. At one level the appeal to legal analogies and criteria of proof has a long pedigree in the history of apologetics, but it is one that has not been thoroughly studied so far in apologetic textbooks.¹³⁵

Geisler and Brooks in their observations on *ad hominem* note:

The weight of testimony of a witness in a court might be diminished if it is shown that the man is a chronic liar, but it does not mean that his testimony is false, only that it is not credible. There may be other witnesses who testify to the same thing and are reliable.¹³⁶

Several apologists no doubt feel that the legal analogy is very pertinent when assessing the credibility of figures such as Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell, Sun Myung Moon, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and so forth. The grounds for this are that these individuals make claims to their status as a prophet or enlightened being, and if events or ethical issues furnish a different light on those claims then their character is fair game for criticism. If one intends to invoke the legal analogy then due regard must be given to the rules of evidence and cross-examination procedures in your own cultural contexts. There are subtle rules about what is admissible evidence in court when establishing a witness' expertise or challenging a witness' credibility by citing a prior criminal record.

Moreover, keeping in mind the hazards associated with *ad hominem* argumentation generally, we must ask ourselves whether we ought to be seeking to discredit other faiths by all means fair or foul. The truth of the gospel is what missionaries and apologists are supposed to be interested

in proclaiming and defending, and we really must give sober thought to what our motives and priorities are. The testimony of Scripture is that all have fallen short of God's glory and if we intend to prove the dishonesty of teachers in other faiths we must surely be prepared to confront our own shortcomings too. Here I do not simply mean internal disputes over say the heterodoxy of Word-Faith teachers or disputing radical theology, but rather that individually we must be prepared to ðownö our spiritual misdemeanors when confronted with them, even at the hands of non-Christian critics.

We might also reflect on the tit-for-tat efforts of Mormon apologists Robert and Rosemary Brown who have engaged in extensive *ad hominem* argumentation to discredit the credentials of Christian apologists like Walter Martin and Ed Decker.¹³⁷ It evokes the old adage "people living in glass houses should not throw stones". Are we not all inhabitants of the glass house?

2.5. Debunking, Discernment and Discipleship

As has already been noted, one of the great strengths of the heresy-rationalist apologia is its emphasis on doctrinal discernment. This style of argument is best suited to convincing evangelicals that the new religions are definitely not orthodox or compatible with Christianity. Of course we begin at the outset with the suspicion or conviction that a given movement is probably unorthodox and our inquiries invariably confirm that. The benefit from that sort of analysis does translate into doctrinal clarity for Christians, and I am not disputing the need for that kind of outcome in the life of the Church.

There are other issues for reflection that also arise out of this approach. One concerns evangelistic style or method and the fourth part of this paper is reserved for that exercise. Another issue concerns our strong reliance or emphasis on rationalist arguments to debunk the teachings of the new religions. Our discussion shall concentrate on this latter issue.

2.5.1. Reason is Important

One of the distinguishing marks of God's creation of human beings is that we are made in the image and likeness of God. A fundamental part of our humanity is that we have cognitive or rational capacities, as well as emotional and spiritual capacities. Our ability to think and reason distinguishes us from other sentient creatures that inhabit the earth. So it is entirely appropriate that we make use of our analytical abilities as it attests to our created nature and also as we bear witness about Jesus Christ. Apologetics as a discipline necessarily involves our using inferential reasoning to proclaim, commend and defend the faith. So reasoning has its place in our efforts to persuade people about the



message of Christ. However we need to be alert to both the misuse of reason and any limitations it may have in the context of apologetic witness.

2.5.2. Naivety and Pseudo-Science

Richard Bube of Stanford University has highlighted certain tensions between authentic science and pseudo-science, and between authentic theology and pseudo-theology. Bube used the word *õpseudoõ* to emphasize something as being *õcounterfeitõ*, and he sought to illustrate what he detected as problems arising with cults and the occult that support their theology with pseudo-science. He examined these problems with reference to astrology, Scientology, Christian Science, and Transcendental Meditation. He sought to illustrate how pseudo-science can be used to reinforce the claims of pseudo-religion. After charting what he detected as philosophical and scientific limitations in these cults or occult activities, Bube then felt there was an important lesson for Christians. This involves the need to properly distinguish authentic science and authentic religion over against pseudo-science and pseudo-theology:

Although we have been concerned in this installment primarily with those cases where pseudo-science and pseudo-theology are combined, it should be recognized that pseudo-science or pseudo-theology can arise also in other contexts. It is possible, for example, for those who profess an authentic Christian position to become entrapped in pseudo-science; likewise it is possible for those who are engaged in authentic science to become entrapped in pseudo-theology. The Christian, therefore, needs also to be aware that an orthodox religious position does not automatically establish an orthodox scientific understanding, any more than an authentic practice of science guarantees an authentic religious interpretation. Again discrimination is essential. To attack one engaged in pseudo-religion and authentic science by attacking his science is disastrous; so also is the attack on one engaged in pseudo-science and authentic theology by an attack on his theology. Christians have frequently been guilty of the former, and the world has often been guilty of the latter. Hopefully Christians will have learned from the past not to fall into the same kind of pitfalls as the world í Authentic science and religion should go together; pseudo-science and pseudo-religion are often joined. But an authentic religious view can appear to be supported by pseudo-science, and a pseudo-religious view can

appear to be supported by authentic science. Discrimination is essential.¹³⁸

Bube's point is that both cult devotees and Christians can be prone to falling foul of faulty reasoning and be too naïve or easily impressed by theological claims couched in scientific jargon.

2.5.3. The "Hume" Attack

Whilst Bube has drawn attention to a valuable lesson we can all surely benefit from, it is also important for us to exercise great care in the manner in which we rely on rational or seemingly "scientific" arguments. A salutary lesson is furnished by the Anglican polemicist Conyers Middleton (1683-1750) and Scottish empiricist David Hume (1711-1776).¹³⁹ Middleton composed a work dealing with miracles from the era of the Church Fathers onwards. In particular Middleton sought to refute alleged miracles used to support Roman Catholic claims to exclusive Church authority. Colin Brown notes that Middleton's argument "is based upon the conviction that any testimony to the miraculous is more likely to be deceived or deceiving than it is to be true."¹⁴⁰ It is ironic that the sceptic Hume dismissed biblical miracles mirroring much of Middleton's argument against post-biblical miracles.¹⁴¹ Middleton's rationalist criterion was simply extended by Hume to dispose of Jesus' resurrection.

Now the Middleton and Hume illustration serves as a sobering point on how Christian enthusiasm for hard-nosed rationalist and reductionist arguments can backfire. Reductionist assumptions have surfaced in the writings of evangelical stage illusionists who analyze psychic phenomena. Now we can be grateful for the critical insights offered by professional stage-illusionists about psychic fraud.¹⁴² It is easy for stage illusionists to create effects that can trick an audience, including scientists trained in the art of observation. Some evangelical stage illusionists have applied the insights of their entertainment profession to call into question many instances of claimed psychic or paranormal powers.¹⁴³ Their contributions serve as a salutary warning about gullibility and deception.

However, at times evangelical stage illusionists can over indulge in reductionist arguments and draw conclusions that are in conflict with the Bible. An instance of this occurs with the way some stage illusionists handle Saul's encounter with the medium at Endor. Consider the following two examples.

First example:



Some people cite the story in 1 Samuel 28, where king Saul visited the medium at Endor and called up the deceased prophet Samuel, as evidence of genuine contact with the dead. As we have noted earlier, that is a dangerous conclusion. For one thing, the witch seemed genuinely shocked by the appearance. In fact, if you study this passage carefully, you will note that Saul himself never actually saw the form. *The medium* described what she saw, and everything Samuel spoke she easily could have known, so it is possibly a hoax. Another possible explanation is that a demon appeared impersonating Samuel. While we do not believe Satan has the ability to give anyone supernatural powers, he certainly has the ability and desire to try to deceive God's people. We are not convinced that God would go against His specific command and do something He has condemned by bringing the spirit of Samuel back from the dead. In any case this unique example in Scripture should not be used as evidence that contact with the dead is possible.¹⁴⁴

Second example:

"The Hebrew word *'ob* means 'one who speaks as if from the belly'; it is derived from another word meaning 'a hollow sounding gourd'; the reason for the selection of this Hebrew word is because the medium is a ventriloquist and does not actually contact the spirits of the dead, but merely mimics their appearance; it was not a popular belief at the time of the writing of the text that the spirits of the deceased could be contacted (see 1 Samuel 28)."¹⁴⁵

Evaluation:

The first writer proposes two alternative explanations. We can tabulate them like this:

- (1) A mediumistic hoax.
- (2) A demonic impersonation.

The second writer offers this explanation:

- (3). Mediums were using ventriloquism and this is substantiated by semantic data on a key word in the passage.

Analysis of First Writer:

Now the first writer's twin explanations are riddled with problems. The fundamental problem with explanation number (1) is the rationalist assumption that Saul could not possibly have encountered the deceased Samuel. The great difficulty with this assumption is that the text simply does not allow for a hoax. The passage in context indicates that Saul goes

in disguise and submits his request for the medium to contact the deceased Samuel. Nowhere does the text explicitly state or even obliquely imply that the medium engaged in a conjuring trick. The hoax interpretation excludes the possibility that Samuel could have appeared and so a reductionist conclusion is reached.

In the case of explanation number (2) the writer is willing to allow the possibility for demonic impersonation of Samuel, but not Samuel himself. The biblical text however does not indicate that a deceiving spirit appeared, and the stage illusionist infers it because his presuppositions are closed to the possibility that Samuel did actually appear.

What troubles the stage illusionist is the tension perceived between God prohibiting contact with the dead, and God allowing the spirit of Samuel appearing to Saul. However this can be resolved by realizing there is no need for a disjunction between God's prohibitive command and God's sovereign decision to deliver a word of judgment by a dead servant. First, consider the reasons for prohibiting contact with the dead:

- God is sovereign and contact is reserved exclusively between himself and people on earth.
- God is the author of truth and is trustworthy and knows all things.
- Mediums who contact the dead are engaged in idolatry and disobey God's commands.
- The dead simply do not have any major advantage over those who walk the earth with regards to direct access to God. There are no "middle men" who can truly help us.

Now consider God permitting Samuel to meet Saul. The incident at Endor demonstrates Saul's contradictory behavior in his apostasy: he consults a medium in order to have contact with Yahweh's prophet and judge! Before any ancestral ghost or false spirit can be summoned Samuel appears to deliver a message of judgment. Samuel's appearance startles the medium and cancels out her role as intermediary. The stage illusionist claims that Saul never saw the form of the spirit and this assertion is used to buttress the belief that the medium is using trickery. However the text expressly states that Saul bows down before the spirit of Samuel and they converse directly with one another. It can be legitimately inferred then that this is a sovereign intervention by God. We should also recall that God allows the spirits of Moses and Elijah to appear on the mountain when Jesus is transfigured (Matt. 17:1-6; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:28-36). Of course the transfiguration episode is very



different from Saul's necromancy. Still we have two specific cases where God allowed the spirits of his deceased servants to appear on the earth.

God is not guilty of inconsistency about breaking his own commands in either of these cases. The command is that humans should not consult mediums to contact the dead but should seek direct contact with God. In necromancy idolatry occurs with false spirits. This prohibition however has nothing to do with God choosing to send in special circumstances the spirit of a deceased righteous servant as a courier to interact with those alive on the earth. In scripture God takes the initiative to send his angels to the earth, but nowhere do the scriptures exhort humans to actively try to contact angels. The stage illusionists have misunderstood 1st Samuel 28. God is not forbidding necromancy on one hand, and then promoting it on the other hand. The Endor account shows that both the medium and Saul got more than they bargained on.

Consider the account of Saul's entire reign. 1st Samuel shows that shortly after Saul is anointed as king that he disobeys Samuel's instructions and the Lord God immediately rejects Saul in favor of another (1 Sam. 13:10-14). Thereafter Saul has mixed fortunes during his reign and madly pursues David whom the Lord God has nominated to be Saul's rightful successor. As Saul is rejected the Lord God refuses to provide him with any more guidance or answers (1 Sam. 28:6). What the rest of the chapter indicates then is that Saul's spiritual state is apostate because he failed to completely drive out the Canaanite religious practices prohibited in Moses Law (28:9). The presence of Canaanite religion inside the Promised Land was a problem from the time of the Judges until both Israel and Judah were driven into exile. What undergirds the books of Samuel and Kings is a theology concerning the sovereignty of God who controls Israel's history. Allied to this is the authorial perspective that the monarchical leadership of Israel is assessed on the grounds of fidelity to covenantal righteousness or spiritual infidelity expressed in all forms of idolatry.¹⁴⁶

Saul went in disguise to pass through enemy territory to visit the medium. The text states that when she saw Samuel she knew that Saul was her client (28:12). Saul asked her what she saw and she described an old man dressed in a robe, and the text expressly says that Saul then knew it was indeed Samuel and he bowed to the ground (28:14). Samuel demanded to know why he had been disturbed and Saul explained that God was no longer providing any guidance or answers (28:15). Samuel announces final judgment on Saul and his household (28:16-19). Saul

had failed throughout his reign to fully comprehend the fact that God had rejected him and was ignoring him. It is with Samuel's post-mortem announcement that Saul finally realizes his folly and he perishes the next day in battle (31:1-6).

Saul is judged because he had failed to obey God's commands (28:18; cf. 15:9-33). It is difficult to see then how a medium engaged in a hoax would be delivering God's prophetic message of judgment that Saul was about to die. The same problem exists for demonic impersonation since demons serve the "father of lies" and are unlikely candidates to deliver God's true prophetic message.

Analysis of Second Writer:

Ventriloquism is proposed by the other writer in explanation number (3). This rests on unacknowledged reductionist assumptions that mediums could not contact the dead, and that most people of that era did not believe the dead could be contacted. The weakness with this view is that the biblical prohibitions itemized in Deuteronomy include mediums, spiritists and those who call up the dead (18:10-11. Cf. Lev. 19:31; 20:6). This prohibitive passage nowhere states or implies sham ventriloquism. What the stage illusionist has apparently drawn on here to reach his conclusion are the prophet Isaiah's allusions to mediums who chirp and mutter (Is. 8:19 & 29:4). Some grammarians do find a link between that turn of phrase and ventriloquism. Yet the whole point of Isaiah's remarks are about the futility of the living conferring with the dead because the Lord God lives and reigns.¹⁴⁷

However suppose we grant that mediums were just ventriloquists. Let us also concede the stage illusionist's claim that hardly anyone from Saul's era believed the dead could be contacted. If this is so then it is hard to fathom why Saul would bother going behind enemy lines to consult a medium since he already knew the dead were uncontactable.

What is also problematic is that the stage illusionist's presuppositions lead to eisegesis (i.e. reads into the passage) rather than exegesis (reading out what the text actually means). He does not indicate why semantic data on the derivation of the word *'ob* is needed to be able to understand the whole passage. Although there is some possible support for his lexical data about the derivation of the Hebrew word *'ob*, he does not take into account other derivations. So he fails to explain why his "ventriloquist" nuance is the only viable option.¹⁴⁸

These examples do not vitiate the heresy-rationalist model of apologetic. However they do illustrate that at times apologists can unwittingly apply rationalist and reductionist assumptions that are at odds with scripture.



We must remember the "Hume attack". It is ironic that on the one hand we defend the miracle of Jesus' resurrection and yet on the other we can imitate Hume in explaining away the paranormal, magical or supernatural elements of non-Christian faiths. The biblical witness indicates these things can and often do "work", but are forbidden by God as "no-go" zones. Could it be that our reductionist attitude towards non-Christian faiths today reflects too much Enlightenment-based rationalism at the expense of scriptural teaching?

2.5.4. The Limits of Rational Debunking

The next discussion topic is confined to highlighting weaknesses with the rational debunking apologetic directed to new age spirituality.

Whether they operate from a presuppositionalist or evidentialist perspective, apologists often try to demonstrate what they see as being the irrationality of new age beliefs and practices.¹⁴⁹ Once again, it must be noted that such analysis can be helpful in differentiating Christian and new age viewpoints. Yet if that constitutes the primary or sole response to new age then Christians are not going to make much impact on today's seekers. The popular impression of new age among Christians is that it is weird, kooky, irrational, silly, ephemeral and demonic. When something is unfamiliar and out of the daily experience of the Christian, these sorts of impressions are understandable and even predictable. I suggest though that what the Christian is really experiencing is a form of "culture shock". As new age ideas and practices are unfamiliar it is no wonder then that Christians initially struggle in processing and digesting what they encounter.

Wouter Hanegraaff proposes that new age religion is very much a secular religion that celebrates the self and celebrates aspects of modernity, but reorients modernity out of its shortcomings and into a sacred framework. He has pointed out "there is a persistent pattern of New Age culture criticism, directed against what are perceived as the dominant values of western culture in general, and of modern western society in particular."¹⁵⁰ So while new age practitioners will use the accoutrements and technology of modern society, Cartesian rationalism is rejected on the grounds that it reduces spirit to mere matter. As the seeker repudiates the heavy emphasis on rationalism generally, the seeker also sees the extent to which western Christianity is absorbed in rationalist structures and constructs.

John Drane has argued that apologists misfire when tackling new age on solely rational, analytical grounds:

In the face of an increasingly intellectual Establishment, one of the things that Christians need to bear witness to today is the fact that we are creatures of reason, and that, notwithstanding all the mistakes our forebears have undoubtedly made, the capacity for rational understanding is one of the fundamental marks of being fully human. But to engage with the New Age at this level is a serious mistake, for to most New Agers, this methodology is one of the key contributory factors to the crisis in Western culture. Using the tools of modernity to address the New Age will get nowhere, for it is by definition immune to rational criticism. The simple fact is that, while many aspects of the New Age prescription for the ailments of today's world may be nonsensical and meaningless, its diagnosis of the disease is too accurate for comfort. Christian beliefs, spirituality and lifestyles have become almost exclusively focused on rational systems of thinking, with a consequent marginalization of the intuitional, the emotional, the relational and the spiritual.¹⁵¹

Apologists should take the time to talk to new age seekers, especially at the places where they gather. As one begins to converse about weaknesses in their beliefs and couple that with a commending of the gospel, it becomes clear that the rational deconstruction or debunking of new age is to the seeker like water off a duck's back. Apologists must be mindful of the fact that the critical dissection of a competing worldview does not automatically establish the veracity of Christianity to the seeker. Indeed, the strict dichotomy so beloved by evangelicals about modernity-postmodernity falls apart when witnessing in new age circles. That is, at times one can intuit the emphasis on storytelling as a guide to wisdom, the personal delving into psychotechnologies to find strength and hope to live, and the suspicion of metanarratives. One can talk with a new age seeker for example over the limitations and defects inherent in a reincarnation-karma approach to life, and seekers often readily acknowledge them. The conversation can then nicely shift over to the teachings of the risen Jesus. A seeker may even warm to the notion that the resurrection confirms what Jesus said and did is powerful, meaningful and true. Right at this juncture the seeker will then "flip" from being fuzzily postmodern and then demand proof to resolve the alleged errors, contradictions and historical problems they believe makes the gospel accounts doubtful!¹⁵²

Perhaps the major drawback with the heresy-rationalist debunking of new age is that apologists do not seem to take into account the reasons why people are exploring this spirituality rather than Christianity. We



can often be so busy telling people why their beliefs are wrong and telling them that they ought to believe the gospel that we do not stop to listen to the seeker. If we first spend the time finding out what has attracted them to look for spiritual answers, we might discover that they honestly do feel that the church is irrelevant. Obviously unless and until we start addressing their questions, fears and hopes, then how can we expect them to take an interest in what we believe is vital?

After more than a decade of evangelism in new age festivals I have found that people start with questions about meaning in the context of how things can work out in the routines of daily life. Some of these questions in other words begin at the bottom in street-life realities, rather than commencing in the rarefied realms of epistemic truth. This is a small sample of what I have encountered by way of first-order-of-priority questions that seekers pose:

- How can I be the best person I can possibly be?
- Who am I anyway and who might I become, and would anyone else care?
- Where do I find release from my brokenness?
- Where is the heart of love and acceptance?
- What kind of values should I embrace?
- Where do I find peace?
- How do I cope with my pain and illness?
- How can I find my place in the cosmos?
- What path is best for me?
- How is it that the cosmos I inhabit, which gives evidence of design and purpose and ought to be harmonious, is so screwed up?

These sorts of questions are not the ones we typically address in discipleship-evangelism courses like Alpha, Christianity Explained and The Y Course. Instead we invariably start with questions either about God's existence or Jesus. Indeed the very vocabulary we are accustomed to using is often unfamiliar or seems odd to the non-Christian. For example, we often pose the question, "Why did Jesus die?" Now what we hope to address through that question is the meaning of the cross and atonement. However to someone who has little or no church background the question sounds quite silly - why did Jesus die, well he stopped breathing! If we were to rephrase that question with the same aim in mind it would be more meaningful to ask, "why was Jesus executed?"

I believe that where our stratagems in rational debunking fall down with new age seekers is that we are too eager to start weighing in on what we see as the errors of new age, and then we push the agenda over to Jesus, the cross and resurrection. Now I am not intimating that these are somehow unimportant issues, they are crucial! However this gambit of ours is premised on adopting a declaratory role of uni-directional speech. It does not intersect or converse with the seeker's quest. How unlike we are to the way Jesus met people at their point of need and talked with them about their pain, hurt, anguish and confusion in life (e.g. John 4). Perhaps we need to rethink the way we approach people (and by extension in our written apologias). Maybe if we adopted the style of Jesus in conversing with real people and not write about hypothetical characters we imagine from the comfort of our armchairs, we just might begin to see seekers come to Christ. It needs to be noted, by the way, that seekers do raise more typical apologetic questions as they pertain to the authenticity of scripture, problem of evil, and ethical questions. However these tend to arise further down the line and are not immediately paramount in the minds of seekers.¹⁵³

Some of us probably need to reflect about our stance when tackling new age seekers. Perhaps some of us see new age and cult devotees as akin to the Sadducees and Pharisees. That may be one of the biggest stumbling blocks we have to confront. We might be positively mistaken in our understanding and strategies for evangelism and apologetics with devotees. Jesus rebuked the Jewish sectarians because they were the entrusted custodians of the Jewish faith. They were supposed to be enabling sinners to come into God's kingdom. It maybe somewhat anachronistic, but we might better grasp things if we think of Jesus' rebukes as being directed at "church-going folk". He was angry with the Jewish sectarians because they should have known better.

Yet when Jesus ministered to sinners he did not debunk their heresies, but addressed them in their dire needs. Think of the Samaritan woman (John 4) and take note that she belonged to a different culture and a different religion. Consider afresh how Jesus conversed with her, and how he handled the subject of differing religious beliefs. As we reflect on that scripture then we might want to do some soul-searching. Are we really trying to reach devotees because we see them as sinners in need of Christ? Or are we merely rebuking devotees because we cast them in the mould of heretics who allegedly pervert the gospel and prevent people from entering God's kingdom? Are we following the kingdom commission to make disciples from the nations, which in our specialized area of ministry means the "nations" and "tribes" of the cults?



We shall now leave aside the analysis of the heresy-rationalist model, and in Part Three our attention will be devoted to assessing other models used by apologists and evangelists.

(End of Part Two)

CONTOURS OF COUNTERCULT APOLOGETICS

Apart from the heresy-rationalist model, countercult apologists have also used at least five other models. Sometimes these other models have been combined with each other or with the heresy-rationalist model. These models are denoted by the following classificatory terms:

- End-Times Prophecy & Conspiracies
- Spiritual Warfare
- Apostate Testimonies
- Cultural Apologetics
- Behavioralist Apologetics

Now in order to have a full-orbed portrait on the contours of countercult apologetics the following installment of this essay will briefly profile each of the aforementioned models accompanied by a short analysis of their respective strengths and limitations. After the five models have been analysed, then the discussion will turn to other critical questions and issues that affect countercult apologetics in general. This will then set the scene for the last installment of this essay, which will provide a skeletal outline of a holistic or integrated approach grounded in missiological principles.

3. End-Times Prophecy and Conspiracies

The key feature of this interpretative grid is that the new religions are classified primarily as Satanic signs connected with the fulfilment of eschatological - i.e. end-times - prophecies. In this approach the new religions, new age and current interests in the occult are understood eschatologically to be the likely fulfilment of Jesus' Olivet discourse concerning the last days. Apologists in this camp sometimes speculate about the eschatological Antichrist emerging from one of these movements. Nearly all who use this approach are committed to a particular understanding of end-times prophecy known as Dispensational Premillennialism.¹⁵⁴ Often these conjectures are presented through a conspiracy theory paradigm where contemporary news events and the religious claims of leaders in new religious movements are linked

together. So in their expositions the apologists find connections between conspiracies and political cabals that are alleged to be surreptitiously working towards the creation of a one-world government. It tends to be a variation on the widespread 'Illuminati' plot one regularly finds in extremist political literature.¹⁵⁵

Hal Lindsey and Dave Hunt initially offered an end-times interpretation concerning the new religions generally.¹⁵⁶ Lindsey drew attention to the emergence of Transcendental Meditation, EST, Sun Myung Moon, the New Consciousness spirituality, and the resurgence of the occult. He concluded:

"What I noted as a growing trend toward this in *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* is now an established fact. I believe that the false prophets which were predicted in the days before the return of Jesus Christ are going to increase in influence and numbers. The emphasis upon man as the center of the universe, the influx of Eastern religions and cults, and the attention to the occult are preparing the world to accept the Antichrist who will come into world power largely through his occultic, supernatural powers."¹⁵⁷

In 1983 Constance Cumbey and Dave Hunt independently of each other interpreted the emerging New Age movement as being a plausible vehicle through which the Antichrist could arise.¹⁵⁸ Others who have invoked either the end-times model or the conspiracy paradigm as a way of interpreting new religions and New Age include Tal Brooke, Stan Deyo, Zola Levitt, Roy Livesey, Texe Marrs, Barry Smith, Don E. Stanton, John Weldon, Clifford Wilson and Morag Zwartz.¹⁵⁹

3.1. Strengths of This Model

There are three positive points to be discerned in this model. The first point is that these writers uphold a very high view of the authority and inspiration of the Bible. Over against the competing "scriptures" or revelations of the new religions, these apologists point unwaveringly to the revelatory foundations of the Christian faith. A commendable outcome is that the reader is confronted with the claims of the Bible to be God's Word, and particularly for the committed Christian that sort of exposition can help bolster one's faith.

The second point is that there is a consistent feature that runs through their writings: the Bible's trustworthiness can be demonstrated through the fulfilment of prophecy. Within the history of apologetics, fulfilled prophecy has been ably used with respect to Christ's first advent.¹⁶⁰ At a theoretical level this model builds upon the proofs developed from already fulfilled prophecies and extends this into a case for the imminent



fulfilment of as yet unfulfilled - hence end-times - prophecies. Again a potentially helpful outcome is the increase in confidence on the part of the reader in the Bible especially in understanding the place and significance of prophecy.

The third strong point of this model is the attention drawn to Biblical teachings about spiritual deception. Whilst this element may be discerned in all of the countercult models under discussion in this essay, the end-times model places great emphasis on Satanic or demonic deception (perhaps only equaled in stress by the spiritual warfare model, see below). A salutary reminder about the problem and peril of spiritual deception is surely not to be taken too lightly. However to ensure that a balanced view of cults is achieved the deception factor must not be used in isolation from other equally important theological categories such as missiology, pastoral care, and practical theology.

3.2. Drawbacks

Although this model appears to enjoy grass-roots popularity in evangelical circles, it suffers from several technical weaknesses that vitiate it altogether.

3.2.1. No Critical Reflection on Their Hermeneutic

The first and foremost problem concerns the popular dispensational prophetic hermeneutic used by these apologists.¹⁶¹ Within popular dispensationalist circles there has been an appalling and all too frequent tendency to "cry wolf" over prophetic scenarios and current affairs. The game of "pin-the-tail-on-the-Antichrist" has so preoccupied prophecy enthusiasts that there seems to be a complete absence of critical awareness about all the failed candidates of yesteryear.¹⁶² John Warwick Montgomery reminds us of the cases of Reverend M. Baxter, a former missionary of the Episcopal Church in America and Oswald J. Smith of the People's Church in Toronto, Canada. In 1866 Baxter explicitly identified Louis Napoleon as the Antichrist with the Battle of Armageddon scheduled for the years 1872-1873. In 1927 Oswald Smith's book *Is the Antichrist at Hand? What of Mussolini*, left readers in no doubt as to the identity of the Antichrist.¹⁶³

Dwight Wilson, himself an Assemblies of God pastor and dispensationalist, painstakingly pointed out how prophecy enthusiasts have named the Kaiser, Hitler, Stalin and many others as the Antichrist.¹⁶⁴ Regrettably, the popular apologists never learn from these past mistakes so as to question the wisdom of "pin-the-tail-on-the-Antichrist". This is

probably due to a lack of any sense of their own historical roots about how previous generations of pop writers on prophecy have cried wolf. In the absence of this depth awareness the pop apologist simply repeats the same mistake. At the core of this problem lies a failure to question their own presuppositions about end-times prophecy so as to critically test the mettle of their thought. This is coupled with a lack of reflective criteria for interpreting current events. So as we simply do not know what proportion of history is left to unfold before the Second Advent, today's definitive scenario about the end-times and current events can easily become tomorrow's embarrassing discard. Montgomery sums up the critical drawbacks this way:

In essence, the intractable objection is that we simply do not have the perspective on our own time sufficient to be able to predict the future accurately or confidently relate biblical prophecy to what is happening at the moment í We are not saying that such (rather pitiful) efforts at end-time prophecy reach the level of the false prophets condemned in the Old Testament: those who 'speak a vision out of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord' (Jer. 23:16). But we are saying that end-time prophecy lacks the necessary factual grounding to make it an effective apologetic to the unbeliever - and that it can be and often is in reality counterproductive, lowering rather than raising the credibility of Christianity in the eyes of the outsider.¹⁶⁵

Montgomery's closing sentence does not consist of mere rhetoric. One case study that ought to arrest our attention (and especially protagonists of end-times conspiracies) concerns the life of Brian Wardner. Wardner attended a Christian school where his teachers regularly exposed him to end-times prophetic conspiracies. Wardner grew up as an adolescent obsessed with and utterly terrified by the graphic terror depicted about the great tribulation, the mark of the beast and so forth. However as Wardner later intuited, the books and films he consumed on the topic were guilty of pin-the-tail-on-the-Antichrist. As predicted scenarios fell by the wayside, Wardner realized that what his teachers presented as absolute fact and absolute truth about the end-times was a species of "crying wolf!" Understandably Wardner felt he had been exploited and filled with unnecessary fears - to the point where he experiences nightmares to this day. Wardner became disenchanted and embittered and rejected Christianity. Brian Wardner is best known to the world as the androgynous looking rock star Marilyn Manson.¹⁶⁶

3.2.2. Unaware of Evangelical Eschatological Diversity

Pop apologists using the end-times prophecy approach rarely show any awareness of the existence of diverse schools of eschatological thought



within Lutheran, Reformed and evangelical circles.¹⁶⁷ Besides the Dispensational Premillennial stream, which is chronologically the most recent of the four positions, the three other approaches are conventionally classified as: amillennial, postmillennial, historic premillennial. Each of these positions has lengthy and prestigious pedigrees. Such orthodox Christians as Oswald T. Allis, Louis Berkhof, Philip Mauro, and Geerhardus Vos have best represented classic amillennial thought. Loraine Boettner, Charles Hodge, J. M. Kik, W. G. T. Shedd, Augustus Strong, and B. B. Warfield best represent the classic postmillennial position. George Eldon Ladd, William LaSor, George N. H. Peters, and Theodor Zahn best represent the classic and historic premillennial view. It is a pity that the pop prophecy enthusiasts who use the end-times model are unacquainted with this rich and diverse genre of literature (as can be inferred by the lack of specific bibliographical references to these writers).

This lack of awareness of other prophetic hermeneutics translates into either a poor or non-existent ability to critically reflect on their own presuppositions about how and why they interpret prophetic passages of scripture. One simple example is the popular inconsistent tendency to interpret symbolic passages in the Book of Revelation sometimes literally but not always, and with little reasoned justification. Again, where is the exegetical justification for taking the seven first-century churches (Rev. 2-3) as an allegory representing seven spiritual ages or dispensations in the history of the church? As these tend to be unexamined questions, the pop writers base their scenarios on very weak grounds.

So if their apologetic argument is to have credibility and assent among countercult writers generally, then the end-times exponents are going to have to apply themselves to more rigorous study of eschatological literature. This will mean not only reading more scholarly writings in the Dispensational school, but also testing the mettle of their own position by critical comparison with the amillennial, postmillennial and historic premillennial corpus of scholarly literature. It will also mean developing a critical palate for interpreting history, understanding the ancient genre of apocalyptic literature within Judaism generally, and a corresponding discernment about the flaws inherent in conspiracy theories.

3.2.3. Jewish Sign Prophets & Olivet Discourse

Jesus in his Olivet discourse (Matthew 24) responded to his disciples' question about the signs of the times. Throughout this discourse Jesus

warned the disciples to beware of spiritual deception (24: 4-5), false prophets (24:11), and false messiahs (24: 23-25). This is a key passage that end-times apologists appeal to when arguing that the cults and new age of our time are fulfilling what Jesus foretold.

One important step that needs to be taken with Jesus' Olivet discourse is to examine it in its first-century setting before speculating about its fulfilment today through the cults or new age. For a deeper appreciation of various episodes in Jesus' ministry in first-century Palestine, it is helpful to grasp the socio-political-messianic ferment of that era. Paul Barnett, the Australian New Testament scholar, has drawn attention to this very issue. Barnett helps to set the scene this way:

The beginning of each Gospel establishes that God is now fulfilling all the expectations raised by the prophets in the Old Testament. This is now the beginning of God's final chapter. God's great light has shone on the peoples of the world as they sit in darkness and the shadow of death. This day has now dawned. Prominent at the beginning of each Gospel is John the Baptist, the long-awaited forerunner prophesied in the Old Testament, who points to Jesus as the Greater One who is to come, who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Following immediately after John the Baptist, Jesus declares that the time is now fulfilled, that God is about to break into history and establish his Kingdom. Let Israel repent and turn back to the Lord their God. The combined impact of John's testimony to Jesus and Jesus' own dramatic announcement establishes that the great and terrible Day of the Lord, long-expected in the Old Testament, has now come. This electric announcement charges everything that follows in the Gospels. Those who behold Jesus repeatedly gasp in awestruck amazement, in recognition that the times of God are upon them. God himself is 'in' these times; he is present with his people. This is his 'special' time; Jesus is his 'Special Man.'¹⁶⁸

Elsewhere Barnett notes that from the time of Jesus' infancy up until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, there were various named and unnamed characters who presented themselves in Palestine as "kings" and "prophets." When Herod the Great died (4 BC) three men arose claiming the throne: Judas in Galilee, Simon in Peraea, and Athronges in Judaea. The latter two were quickly disposed of by the Romans, while Judas led an uprising in 6 AD in Galilee. Some sixty years later Menahem the son of Judas captured the fortress at Masada.¹⁶⁹

In Matthew 11:12 Jesus refers to the fact that from the time of John the Baptist's ministry onwards the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence and violent men have sought to take it by force. Barnett suggests that



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Jesus may very well have been alluding to the zeal of those who jumped the gun on the preaching of John the Baptist by trying to inaugurate God's kingdom in a violent overthrow of Rome.¹⁷⁰ It might also explain the actions of the crowd that wanted to seize Jesus and make him King after the miracle feeding (John 6: 15).¹⁷¹

Barnett has also drawn attention to various "sign prophets" who emerge in the years 40 - 70 AD. Barnett notes:

Information about these prophets can be found in Josephus and the New Testament. These men have it in common that they were self-styled prophets who led a multitude to the Jordan, to the wilderness, to the walls of Jerusalem, to the temple (or some other place which had been significant in Israel's salvation history) where they promised them some sign from which, they said, 'salvation' or 'freedom' would follow. (It should be noted that none of these prophets succeeded in performing the signs they promised).¹⁷²

These promised "signs and wonders" evoked great events from Israel's past like parting the Red Sea, the capture of Jericho city and so forth. It is interesting then to note that Jesus expressly warned the disciples about those who would come claiming to be a prophet or messiah via signs and wonders. Jesus indicated that they should not believe those who say he is in the wilderness (Matt. 24:26). The sign prophets appear then in Palestine during the earliest decades of the church's existence and fulfill what Jesus foretold. We must also note that Jesus prefaced the Olivet discourse by foretelling the destruction of the temple (Matt. 24:2), and then during the discourse warned of the temple's desecration and the need to flee (24: 15-26). These events all occurred within the generation that witnessed Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. So we can legitimately say that Jesus' prophecy about false prophets and false Christs was fulfilled midway during the first century AD.¹⁷³

Whilst Jesus' warning may be applied in a more generic sense since the first century AD to all manner of false prophets in the Christian era, to be strictly accurate his Olivet prediction linking impending signs of the temple's destruction to emerging false messiahs is history.

3.2.4. New Age Conspiracy Cogently Critiqued by Heresy-Rationalist Apologists

Some countercult apologists who follow the heresy-rationalist model have also raised criticisms over the claims and conclusions of writers like

Constance Cumbey. Douglas Groothuis, Elliot Miller and certain members of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project have all excoriated glaring weaknesses in Cumbey's work.¹⁷⁴ Their criticisms may be summarized as follows. The portrait of a new age or Aquarian Conspiracy has been hopelessly misconstrued as if it is a centralized plot to control the world, when in reality new agers have been engaged in loose forms of networking. Her end-times scenario suffers from reductionism by denuding scripture of the miraculous or supernatural elements related to God fulfilling predictions. The apocalypse is made contingent on the existence of human plots and electronic technology so that biblical prophecies can be fulfilled. As quotations from New Age writers have been taken out of context, she has drawn a straw man portrait of New Age and used dubious criteria of alleged "buzz words" to castigate evangelicals who advocate social justice teachings. Cumbey's subsequent rebuttal to these apologists shows no critical self-reflection on the difficulties inherent in her hermeneutic of new age and of eschatological scripture.¹⁷⁵ She seems to cast her critics in the role of conspirators who have closed ranks against her, seeking to exclude her insights from countercult discourse.

There is however a remarkable parallel to the position taken by Constance Cumbey about the new age being a highly organized conspiracy designed to overthrow the present world order. Her views are mirrored by some new age seekers who espouse conspiracy theories about the earth's true rulers conspiring to suppress freedom, withholding technological secrets, being in league with aliens, Christianity is a fiction invented by stealing ideas from the mystery religions, and the Christian churches suppress the truths found in lost books from the bible. It is not my purpose to divert the discussion off on to this fascinating tangent, which would be an essay in itself. However it is worth noting that there are some new age devotees who share parallel anxieties about the world's governments being run by a great conspiracy to those espoused by pop eschatologists inside the church. So contrary to the impressions created that new agers are conspiring to control the world, several new agers feel that the world is already under conspiratorial control but they are not orchestrating it! This is a fascinating subject that could repay careful examination as a sociological, philosophical and theological phenomenon.

I would also suggest that the conspiracy paradigm has morphed at a grass roots level so as to constitute a framework for new emerging myths. In these new conspiracy myths elements of older myths and folklore meld in a heady creative mix. They constitute an area demanding fresh apologetic engagement. Some of these myths, many of which derive from or are parallel to stories portrayed in TV and cinema, include:



- Myths of secret cabals controlling society (e.g. as portrayed in *The X-Files*, *Conspiracy*, and *Enemy of the State*).
- Technological myths portraying a controlled world (e.g. the film *The Matrix*).
- Gothic myths (e.g. the nineteenth century fascination with mad-scientist experiments such as Frankenstein, Dr Moreau, and the Invisible Man, now revisited in TV shows like *Alias*, *Dark Angel*, *Buffy*).
- Biological-cloning myths (e.g. The Raelians' reinterpretation of the *elohim* in Genesis being extra-terrestrials who cloned humanity, and imitating this in attempts to begin cloning; David Icke's thesis of aliens already controlling the earth and who have genetically engineered the blonde/blue-eyed human in his book *Children of the Matrix*).
- Contamination myths (e.g. anxieties about deliberate deadly bacteria/virus outbreaks as portrayed in the TV series *The Burning Zone*).
- Abduction myths and mind control (e.g. films like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Total Recall*, UFO abduction stories and all-pervasive Satanic cults engaged in human sacrifices).
- Social resistance myths (e.g. "little people" can thwart the conspiracies of multi-national companies and government - *Erin Brockovich*).¹⁷⁶

3.2.5. Countercult Apologists As Agents of Apostasy?

As we have noted already, the usual conspiracy model maintains that we are in the end-times era and that a global conspiracy is underway to promote a one-world government and a one-world religion that is Antichristic. A few individuals who monitor countercult apologist ministries express an unusual variation to this on the Internet. What is alleged is that many countercult apologists and ministries are tainted with connections to individuals or activities that are deemed to be theologically suspect. Here we have an intriguing and curious apologia: it is an apologia that the apologists who appear to be opposing the cults are actually part of a conspiracy to "dumb down" the dangers of cults. The inference drawn is that this dumbing down is part of the plot that eventually will bring Christians under the yoke of a one-world Antichristian faith.

Two former Roman Catholics who monitor countercult apologetics ministries maintain in a précis to one of their reports:

The interlocking leadership of Spiritual Counterfeits Project, Christian Research Institute and Evangelical Ministries to New Religions connects directly with the Lausanne Consultation on World Evangelism, the New Age Movement and an international network of professional cult apology organizations. Although SCP, CRI and EMNR advertise themselves as apologetics ministries, their *new missiological paradigm* of "dialogue with the cults" is designed to mainstream false religions and deliver undiscerning Christians to the coming One World Religion. Terms such as *New Religions* and *New Spiritualities* are now used by these organizations to replace the terms *cult* and *false religions* — regarded as insensitive and counter-productive in evangelizing cult members. Much truth is mingled with much deception and purveyed through a proliferation of exposés, books, tapes, newsletters, journals, interviews, web sites and global conferences. These well-documented reports take the reader behind the scenes of SCP, CRI, EMNR and other apologetics "ministries" to their *invisible leadership*.¹⁷⁷

It would take a full-length essay to summarize these allegations and to then critically examine the arguments and presuppositions that undergird this outlook. However a few general points may be noted in passing:

- Fallacious reasoning as exhibited in guilt-by-association allegations.
- The tendency, quite common among conspiracy enthusiasts, to *eisegete* (i.e. read into) the materials cited and draw out conspiratorial conclusions where none are warranted.
- Antipathy towards missiological terms such as 'dialogue' and 'missiological paradigm' - these are construed as evidence of apologists being lukewarm Laodicean ecumenists.
- A fundamental failure to grasp that evangelical apologists are drawing on the proper biblical usage of the word dialogue. Similarly the missiological paradigm is concerned with the proclamation of the gospel, making disciples and teaching people to obey Christ's kingdom commands. It is not about establishing ecumenical relations premised on the fallacious generalization that all religions lead to God.
- Lack of understanding of the scholarly methods and terms used in disciplines such as religious studies.
- The general hermeneutical cul-de-sac of conspiracy thinking: those accused of being in the conspiracy who deny they are part of it are obviously duped or they are engaged in a cover-up, ergo the conspiracy is real. Here obstinacy in belief is manifested to the point where it forms "invincible ignorance".¹⁷⁸



- Factual errors combined with misinterpretation of material.¹⁷⁹

3.2.6. Fundamental Defects With Conspiracy Theorizing

Another overarching problem is that apologists who favor conspiracy theories generally seem to be unacquainted with critical literature that highlights logical, epistemological and factual errors in this approach.¹⁸⁰ Although not specifically addressing countercult apologists, Walter Utt, who taught history at Pacific Union College in California, provided a very useful analysis of the Illuminati myth. Utt's points do have direct bearing on how the end-times model accounts for the emergence of new religions, New Age and so on. Utt notes that conspiracy thinking allows us to simplify complex issues by turning history into a puppet show. In the process we absolve ourselves of personal responsibility for the part we play in history. He finds that the literature is riddled with poor research techniques, logical fallacies and simplistic historical argumentation:

If we consider the durable Illuminati legend as a 'case study', we can see that a major problem is in the use of historical materials. All assertions are *not* of equal weight. A *mélange* of truth and error, clothed in ostensibly scholarly apparatus of the footnote, may be swallowed without question for two reasons - it fits with the presuppositions of the 'researcher' and, second, the nature of historical investigation is not properly understood. Footnotes may be ever so accurate in the sense they correctly quote a statement, but the statement itself may be worthless as proof. A quote must be checked first, to see if it was ever said at all, and, if said, *in what context*. What else was said? Did the speaker or writer mean what he is now represented as meaning? Is his testimony credible? In other words, critical evaluation of sources is essential to come even close to historical verity.¹ A characteristic that recurs in most expositions of conspiracy theories is the meticulous and plodding devotion to 'facts', usually, today, in a plethora of footnotes, or the use *in extenso* of a document, real or imaginary. Then comes the leap of faith, the fantastic jump from specifics to a conclusion that shows little connection with the alleged supporting 'facts'. Relentless logic, heavy with citations, jumps to the breathtaking non sequitur. To reduce painful, complex developments to simple explanations, ignoring all the play and counterplay of human activity and the complexities of human social behavior, is an irresistible temptation to those frustrated by the direction in which history's currents seem to be running.¹⁸¹

Utt suggests that the advocate of conspiracy theories thinks he or she is offering a comprehensive understanding of world trends, but in reality suffers from tunnel vision by ignoring data that conflict with the theory. The conspiratoid's view of good is unachievable and so ultimate evil is seen as having supreme sway in the world. Utt acknowledges that Satanic rebellion is real, but soberly restrains us from thinking that this readily translates into an ingenious unified human scheme. He reminds us that 'the wicked don't get on too well with one another either.'¹⁸² Utt concludes with words that could easily have been composed with advocates of end-times conspiracy thinking about new religions:

We have a responsibility as citizens to think clearly, even in an age of increasingly irrationality. With some understanding of human behavior, with a care for the quality of the information we accept, we will not buy these farfetched concepts but will recognize them as recurrent expressions of pessimism reflecting the fears and needs of insecure people in troubled times.¹⁸³

Utt's closing remarks should goad all countercult apologists to think carefully about where our confidence lies. Is our confidence really grounded in a sovereign God and in biblical revelation? The tenor of the end-times literature resounds with fear about Satan, demons, the encroachment of other beliefs and practices is cast solely in terms of evil plots to overturn our supposedly 'Christian' societies. As the new religions do indeed impinge on our sensitivities apologists can surely come up with credible explanations as to why new religions flourish other than appealing to well-worn and discredited thought forms such as those found in conspiracy thinking.

3.2.5. Conspiracies As Occult Thinking

Following on from Utt's analysis we come to John Warwick Montgomery who offered a biting profile on a spiritual problem he diagnosed as 'religious kookishness'.¹⁸⁴ He defined it this way:

"By 'religious kookishness', then, I mean absurd irrationalism associated with a theological position: nuttiness that produces disrespect for the theology proclaimed in conjunction with it."¹⁸⁵

Montgomery chided American evangelicals for confusing theological conservatism with sociological and political conservatism. He discerned that extreme right wing political tendencies obfuscated the gospel:

Currently, rightist mentality has also been displayed by those fundamentalists who have suspected that a nefarious plot of the



'international Communist conspiracy' was responsible for Kennedy's assassination - in spite of all evidence to the contrary. Such kookishness, which balefully confuses conservative Christianity with reactionary attitudes to social life and to authoritative opinion in general, gives the worst possible impression of the Christian message to the unbelieving world of the day. Here, in fact, we see the really tragic character of kookishness when carried on by Christians: it makes the very gospel appear kooky. It substitutes another (and a false) offense for the offense of the Cross.¹⁸⁶

A few years hence Montgomery revisited this problem in his monograph on the occult. He referred to his 1967 article and extended his commentary on conspiracy thinking in a way that ought to arrest the attention of its Christian proponents:

I illustrated three areas in which evangelicals have shown themselves to be kooks first-class: prophetically establishing the end of the world in all its details; anti-intellectualism and the setting of 'the Spirit' over against serious learning and education; and the embracing of right-wing political and social fanaticisms, such as the conviction (à la *Doctor Strangelove*) that 'the international communist conspiracy' is poisoning our free society through fluoridation. Connected with such crackpot ideas are, inevitably, occult notions. When evangelicals become convinced that only they know what is 'really' going on (only they see the communist menace in its true gravity; only they are aware of the true naturopathic methods of healing, etc.), a gigantic step has been taken on the road to Mordor's Land. For hiddenness is, as we have been at pains to emphasize, one of the chief aspects of the occult, and indeed, its etymological meaning. The evangelical, in his neurotic defensiveness against a world that so very largely rejects his central convictions, reacts by finding more and more 'hidden truths' that the world, in its 'spiritual blindness', can only ridicule. Thus the Bible becomes a source of bizarre information on matters that can only puzzle the uninitiated unbeliever - educated though he may be in his own eyes, while lacking the true 'wisdom'.¹⁸⁷

The sobering point then is that the zeal of the popular apologist who uses the model is invariably not moderated by keen discernment and reflection, and ironically the apologist is lured into an esoteric understanding of reality that begins to run parallel to the very occultism

the apologist is opposed to. The bizarre outcome is that the pop apologist ends up mirroring the very thing he or she is vehemently denouncing.

3.2.6. Conspiracy Theories Are Anti-Semitic

Perhaps the greatest and most ironic defect with conspiracy theories is that they are a species of anti-Semitism. All the blame for the sinister manipulation of global trends and events is laid squarely on the shoulders of the Illuminati, the 'international financiers' and so forth. These labels are basically synonyms for the Jews.¹⁸⁸ This point is extremely ironic when apologists who are pro-Israel in their eschatology, are unwittingly - and perhaps ignorantly - using an anti-Semitic theory to prove bible prophecies about modern Israel.¹⁸⁹ Moreover whether one feels the state of Israel and the Jews still have a special role to fulfill or not there can be no room for racism in God's kingdom (explicit or implicit).

So this model has very little to commend it as a way of understanding either the new religions or New Age. It does not offer any practical advice as to how one should present the gospel to devotees nor is there any field-tested methods for making disciples out of the ranks of new religions. One might even seriously ask whether this literature presents the content of the gospel at all.

3.2.7. Eschatological Hope

Remarkably, the most promising apologetic aspect of eschatology - one that could fruitfully challenge New Age, Neo-Buddhist and Neo-Pagan concerns about the earth - which apologists have failed to explore so far is to examine once more the powerful biblical vision and promise of a renovated heaven and earth at the consummation of the age (Is. 65, 2 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21). This takes us immediately into doctrinal and practical ethical questions over the theology of the creation, our stewardship of the earth, the place of animals in God's kingdom, and much more. God will indeed restore all things as they were at the beginning of the creation, and Christ concretely delivers the utopia that the various new religions (and indeed Marxists) hope for.¹⁹⁰

4. Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare has, in some Christian circles, become an adjunct tool to evangelism, while for others it almost becomes the panacea for dealing with other religions. Although not strictly qualifying as an apologia, spiritual warfare literature as it concerns new religions and new age does raise some important issues for critical reflection about apologetics and mission.

Two prominent advocates of spiritual warfare tactics as a remedy for new religions are Edward Murphy and Bob Larson. Both Murphy and



Larson maintain that Satan controls all new religions and that reaching adherents is often best achieved through a combination of warfare prayer techniques and exorcisms.¹⁹¹ This approach has been dramatized in Frank Peretti's novels, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness*, which have been elevated in some quarters to the status of combat manuals.¹⁹² The first novel was even accorded the status of a compulsory textbook in one Bible College's course on Christian worldview.¹⁹³

In some tomes spiritual warfare involves discovering what powers may rule over a city or given territory. The relationship between acts of human evil (e.g. a massacre of indigenous people, serial murders), and non-Christian religious practices (e.g. tribal shamanism, human sacrifices) are often correlated to demonic activities. The advancement of the gospel is believed to be impeded because of these factors. So attention is devoted to identifying by spiritual discernment or answers to prayer what demonic forces control an area. Warfare prayer is then a remedy that releases the area for effective preaching.¹⁹⁴ Here some apologists have advocated using George Otis' construct of "spiritual mapping" as a tool for comprehending the new religions.¹⁹⁵

4.1. Strengths

Among the many great challenges that have arisen for many modern western Christians is facing up to how much of an impact Enlightenment-based rationalism and scepticism has affected theology. Here the issue of spiritual warfare tends to bring this matter into focus. Two catalysts for this have been the impact of Pentecostal teachings in the west and the reflections of missionaries on their field experiences. There is an oft-cited essay entitled "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle" by missiologist Paul Hiebert who correctly underscores a glaring deficiency in contemporary western Christian thought over angelology and demonology.¹⁹⁶ So the renewed emphasis on this theological topic is to be welcomed as a corrective to imbalances in western theology where the biblical subjects of angels, demons and spiritual warfare have been marginalized or relegated to insignificance.¹⁹⁷ Advocates of this model are very explicit about spiritual deception.

4.2 Weaknesses

As we touch on some criticisms of this model let it be understood that the issue at hand is not spiritual warfare or the demonic *per se*, but rather the approach taken by some advocates of spiritual warfare.

4.2.1. Narrow Focus

One problem with some advocates of this model is the tendency to concentrate so much attention on the demonic to the exclusion of all else. The end result is that an unbalanced portrait of cult devotees emerges that fails to take consider a broad range of factors. For example two Australian writers on spiritual warfare offer fleeting observations on several cults. This is what they state about the Christadelphians:

"Those who have had any involvement with this sect which rejects the Trinity and believes their future paradise is upon this earth, need special release. They have spirits of deception, legalism, hardness and harshness, guilt and unbelief, as well as being unable to express their emotions."¹⁹⁸

One of the major difficulties with these fleeting remarks is that they are sweeping statements. All that we discover is that the Christadelphians are anti-Trinitarian and that they believe in the earth being restored as a paradise. We are not given any other details to assist us in understanding what the Christadelphians believe. It would help matters if the authors had taken a bit more time and space to inform readers that the Christadelphians are monotheists who accept the Bible as God's inspired word, but who deviate from orthodox Christianity in that they repudiate the doctrine of the trinity.

Further it would help if readers were advised that the Christadelphians acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth is the messiah of Israel, and the appointed one through whom salvation comes. Of course the Christadelphians deny the pre-existence of Christ, affirming he was only an idea in God's mind until the virginal conception and that he was "adopted" as God's son. It would further help if the authors had discussed something about the Christadelphians' principles of hermeneutics for reading the Bible, including their emphasis on reason. From that platform one can then grasp why they place a lot of emphasis on the Abrahamic covenant, soul-sleep, the restoration of the Davidic throne in Jerusalem and so forth. It is unclear whether the authors believe the Christadelphians are in error or not over their expectations for a restored paradise (cf. Is. 65; 2 Pet. 3:13, Rev 21). The authors therefore do not seem to provide a context beyond the demonic for understanding why Christadelphians believe what they do.

Beyond the doctrinal omissions and the lack of any historical context in which to place the Christadelphians, we are left with a rather simplistic diagnostic: Christadelphians require exorcistic release from specific spirits. No case studies are presented to substantiate these claims so no else can be in a position to properly assess their conclusions. For example why is it that Christadelphians are "unable to express their



emotions"? Is this true of all Christadelphians? Are demons the sole cause of this problem or could individuals simply be emotionally constricted due to the way they were reared? Are there other factors which might illuminate our understanding as to why Christadelphians are emotionally maladjusted? As the points are not discussed with reference to the profile on the group, it is difficult to accord much credence to what is asserted by the authors. In some respects, although the authors are upholding the reality of the demonic, their explanations seem to be reductionist in nature - i.e. all other possibilities are excluded from consideration. The problem of dealing with a Christadelphian over the orthodox understanding of the gospel is simply wrapped up in spiritual warfare.

This is but one of several problematic illustrations one could cite from these two authors.

4.2.2. Inaccurate Profiles

Another problem that generally besets this genre of literature is that the profiles on what the cults believe and practice often suffers from inaccurate reporting or even gross misrepresentation. John Smulo, for example, has charted the contours of this problem with respect to the portraits of Satanism found in spiritual warfare literature.¹⁹⁹ Space limitations preclude charting others, but the point should be evident. As with the other apologetic models this misrepresentation hinders rather than helps the church's witness, particularly when non-Christians see their beliefs twisted and distorted by people who claim they have the "truth".

4.2.3. Problems With Peretti's Novels

Frank Peretti's novels are problematic in many ways. First, exorcism replaces evangelism as the remedy for dealing with new age spirituality. The characters no longer repent from sin but are released into faith through exorcisms and prayer warfare. Second, a straw man portrait of new age is drawn. There is no attempt to see that non-Christians who are exploring new age might be looking for meaning and purpose in life. Instead the seekers are cast in the role of being the Devil's puppets and everything associated with their search is branded demonic. There is no recognition of any genuine concerns in new age spirituality about say the degradation of the earth, the loss of personal meaning, the desire for authentic community and a hunger for God. His linking new age sympathizers with Devil worshippers also leaves much to be desired,

particularly since new age seekers do not conceive of a personal being embodying evil and reject the biblical Satan.

Third, as Hexham notes, Peretti reinforces a stereotype about new age which has "unwittingly had a very negative effect on the outlook of numerous evangelicals by labeling many contemporary social movements and institutions as either demonic or potentially evil."²⁰⁰ What emerges then are all the anxieties fundamentalists have traditionally had towards tertiary education, the secular press, state run schools, psychiatry, lawyers and so forth.

Fourth, Peretti's use of the conspiracy model, which has been critiqued above, is problematic because it is not just a literary device. Peretti was asked if was just a literary device or a description of the way things are. He replied:

"Right now, it's half and half - half fictional device, half reality. I think in a few years it will be more reality than it is fiction."²⁰¹

Fifth, even more troublesome is that the depiction of spiritual warfare is not strictly biblical, but built more on anecdotes gathered from the experiences of people Peretti has interviewed.²⁰² Missiologists have observed that the metaphysical combat depicted by Peretti has more in common with the cosmology of the Zoroastrian faith or the demonology of the Greco-Roman mystery religions.²⁰³ Angels can only function properly as long as they have prayer cover; prayer closets replace evangelism; angels implicitly convert people.²⁰⁴ Finally, readers have lost sight of the fact that these are novels and cannot be construed as handbooks on spiritual warfare. Peretti himself has cautioned readers:

"I don't want people to forget that *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness* are novels. They are fictional treatments of spiritual truth. They shouldn't be treated as some kind of treatise on angelology or demonology."²⁰⁵

4.3. Spiritual Warfare as Holistic Lifestyle

One of the deficiencies with some of the spiritual warfare material lies in an over emphasis on prayer warfare and exorcism. However in scripture spiritual warfare is not centred in power over demons. The cross and the resurrection secure the victory. Human beings are not puppets in a cosmic dualist battle between the forces of good and evil. Scripture discloses that humans are primarily responsible for sin, and to be sure, as the essence of sin is self-centredness we suppress the knowledge of God and substitute all kinds of idols. In an idolatrous state we may indeed



attract demonic presences. However we must not overlook passages such as Colossians 2:15, 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 in the equation. An unfortunate outcome can be that people infer all problems are caused by demons and personal accountability for sin, or the sinful acts of others, are diminished as factors. Readers should also take into consideration the folkloric influences that Bill Ellis has detected in the ministry of the late Kurt Koch, the German Lutheran charismatic authority on the demonic.

²⁰⁶

In scripture spiritual warfare is about a total change in lifestyle on the part of the believer, a renouncing of evil and of the self's propensity for sin. Resisting the "principalities and powers" is not confined to exorcisms and prayer techniques. Our ethical choices, the way we conduct our relationships, our workplace behavior, our standing up for righteousness and justice over oppression and injustice - these too form part of the mosaic of what authentic spiritual warfare is about.²⁰⁷ Sadly these elements are often absent from the spiritual warfare manuals and in the analyses of what the Christian's response to the cults should entail.

5. Apostate Testimonies

The use of personal testimonies in evangelism has a long heritage stretching from the pages of Scripture up to the present. Several people who once participated in a cult and converted to Christianity have published their testimonies. The advantage with this approach is that the genre of the spiritual autobiography can be very readable. The accent is on the individual's journey rather than just on an exposition of seemingly abstract beliefs. The ways in which people find their way into new religious movements are many and varied. So too are the ways in which individuals become disenchanted with the cult and then enter into an evangelical Christian faith.²⁰⁸

Sometimes the genre of Christian novels have been used to warn of the perils of new religions, and this form of story-telling can be traced back to the English Brethren novelist and preacher Sydney Watson (1847-1917).²⁰⁹ The countercult novel as an apologia largely functions as a form of boundary-maintenance for Christians.

There are limitations and drawbacks with the testimonial model. First, spiritual autobiographies of former members of new religious movements often have a grim reputation. The genre is largely characterised by a predictable format that focuses on the ex-devotee's disenchantment with the religious movement. The movement is generally

portrayed as insidious, exploitative and devious, with personal recriminations and embittered experiences recounted. The ex-devotee can end up resembling a reformed smoker picketing a smoker's convention. So an uncanny feeling one gets from reading these stories is that we seem to learn more about the author's motives than we do about his or her actual life within the group. It is a rare bird who can engage in some critical self-reflection. Now this does not mean that at the outset one can automatically dismiss all spiritual autobiographies. If we invoke the legal paradigm the witness' story must first be heard before it can be cross-examined for truthfulness and evidential worth. What is important though is that critical discernment is exercised when reading the ex-devotee's story.

Second a collection of testimonies of former disgruntled devotees can be gathered for any religious movement. For every book of an evangelical who has found faith after abandoning atheism, there is a corresponding book for those ex-evangelicals or ex-fundamentalists who are now atheists.²¹⁰ The "Gods That Failed" approach can be helpful for those who may be questioning their commitment and for those who have already deconverted. However, it cannot be overlooked that there are quite a few people who once participated in a church but now travel through new religious movements and new age spirituality. A further sobering point is that some Christians have built up profiles or ministries on the basis of a testimony that has later been proven false or had severe doubts cast on.²¹¹

If we invoke the biblical approach to bearing one's testimony, the example of Paul the apostle is paradigmatic. When Paul presents his conversion story (Acts 26) he does not merely recite what happened on the Damascus Road, but dovetails his personal encounter with the risen Christ with the kerygma and also with apologetic points (e.g. Jesus' public ministry, Jesus fulfilling the Law and Prophets, etc). Here we see Paul's subjective encounter with the risen Christ linked into the core of the gospel's content and buttressed with an apologia related to fulfilled prophecy and the resurrection miracle. The personal subjective experiences enjoyed upon hearing the gospel are carefully connected back to the core message about the risen Christ. This style of bearing testimony short-circuits many of the problems Harold Busséll adduced in his monograph and which were noted in Part Two of this essay.

6. Cultural Apologetics

Unlike the four preceding models, cultural apologetics did not develop out of evangelical countercult ministry. This expression refers to the apologetic style of Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) and the L'Abri fellowship.²¹² Schaeffer was not a countercult apologist but rather was a



cultural apologist. By that I mean his apologetic arguments were concerned with what he perceived to be the devolution of western culture as it progressively abandoned its Christian heritage and presuppositions. Schaeffer specifically interacted with contemporary culture on a spectrum of issues such as existential and philosophical despair, the erosion of human dignity, the degradation of the environment, the loss of ultimate meaning in the arts, personal and social ethics, and so forth. Schaeffer's apologia invariably diagnosed the problem on the basis that Christian presuppositions had been discarded and that the reappropriation of Christian belief was the proper platform from which contemporary cultural crises could be tackled. Although their apologetic arguments do center on refuting the presuppositions of the non-Christian's worldview, the L'Abri apologists do not follow the heresy-rationalist model of drafting up doctrinal comparisons. As the L'Abri style of apologetic developed independently of the countercult community, it is legitimate in my view to treat it as a separate model.

6.1. Apologetic Strengths

Schaeffer took notice of cultural trends in the 1960s and early 1970s, which in later years would be designated new age. He addressed some of these broad elements in *The God Who Is There* and *Pollution and the Death of Man*.²¹³ Others to follow in his apologetic wake include Os Guinness and Vishal Mangalwadi.²¹⁴ To his credit, Schaeffer was a generalist in his ministry who bridged the gap between the intelligentsia and the grass roots believer. He blended together the role of being an evangelist and an apologist. He grasped the broad spectrum of trends in modernity and identified their grass roots impact. He intuited a synthesis occurring between modernity's technological outlook and a personalized mysticism. He saw the decay in modernity corresponding to a loss of human dignity and meaning, with a swing towards a pantheistic based mysticism as the emerging replacement.²¹⁵

Unfortunately Schaeffer did not pursue this line of inquiry any further and died from cancer just on the cusp of new age becoming a populist spirituality. Although he was formally educated in theology, he did not pretend to be a world-beating scholar-apologist, but rather sought to articulate what he observed about contemporary culture and constantly referred back to Scripture. He also drew on the Dutch Calvinist intellectual heritage that enabled him to provide a broad brushstroke analysis to the ailments of contemporary culture. Schaeffer's material helped readers to appreciate and remember the heritage of a European Christian civilization. Schaeffer accomplished this not only in his

writings but also in his personal witness with people when presenting the Christian faith via the great artifacts of Christian culture: the classical musicians and painters, church architecture, the sites of Christian history and so forth.²¹⁶ He appealed to a generation of undergraduate college and university students who were grateful for his insights that strengthened their faith and encouraged them to witness.²¹⁷

Os Guinness likewise offered a descriptive and analytic response to the counter-culture that emerged in the late 1960s. Within his exposition Guinness charted the angst with modernity that was heart-felt among the baby-boomers. He described their counter-cultural alternate lifestyle response to modernity via drugs, emerging eastern mysticism and a fascination with the occult. Vishal Mangalwadi has applied the Schaefferian approach to profiling various Indian gurus and in charting the spiritual search of the new age movement. Mangalwadi's assessment of the gurus highlights what he discerns as the irrationality of their teachings in the light of Christian revelation. His book *In Search of Self* is reminiscent of Schaeffer's style with respect to the descriptive analysis he furnishes about the new age quest for meaning. Their contributions have integrity, are reflective, thoughtful, and interact with the primary non-Christian thinkers. Their reasoning style is generally lucid and so easy to follow, and they write as generalists not specialists.

These apologists try to persuade their readers that, apart from Christian presuppositions about the universe, the non-Christian lacks a sufficient base to live a meaningful life. They invite their readers to see how Christianity is self-consistent as a worldview, and how it alone can adequately explain the meaning of life. This apologetic stance reflects the influences of the Calvinist presuppositional philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd and the verificational apologetic of Edward John Carnell.²¹⁸

6.2. Conceptual Drawbacks

One of the limitations with this approach lies in the attempt to persuade new age seekers to abandon their worldview and "try on" the presuppositions of Christianity for a coherent understanding of reality. As was noted in Part Two of this essay, new age constitutes a culture criticism itself that views both dogmatic Christianity and rationalist philosophies as part of the underlying problem with contemporary society. Seekers see no compelling need to abandon their approach for Christianity, particularly when they see the Christian faith in its modern rationalist characteristics as being at the core of the problem rather than the core solution!



A parallel problem concerns the semi-presuppositional apologetic gambit that Christian belief is more coherent than competing options. First, new agers are not the least bit impressed by anyone who asserts, "My worldview is more coherent than yours." Non-Christians simply look aghast or bemused when a Christian proceeds to say something along these lines, "You cannot know the things of God until you dump your unsound assumptions about reality because they are incoherent and irrational." Anyone can claim that his or her worldviews are consistent and coherent, and when put on the spot the non-Christian can surely ask, "Why should I even listen to you?" New Age apologist Ellwood Norquist repays us in kind with his challenge to traditional Christian beliefs from his own monist worldview.²¹⁹ Thus in a conversation about the gospel the gambit over presuppositions and consistency can end up in a stalemate as the irresistible force meets the immovable object.

Our western emphasis on systematic theology has the strength of compelling us to sift through the biblical data so as to grasp its manifold revelation. We seek to render an orderly, logical and coherent account of the various themes or topics we find in the bible. This is a valid exercise to undertake and one that has an honorable pedigree. To a certain extent though this activity can also reflect the modern rational love of classifying and pigeonholing information. We must be mindful though that while systematic theology can be built into a consistent set of beliefs it may very well leave us with conundrums. Thus the doctrines of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and predestination/free-will present puzzles to our finite comprehension. From a transcendent perspective, presumably these are not conundrums at all. However apologetics is supposed to be addressed to the non-Christian who lacks this perspectival advantage.

6.2.1. Limited Appeal

In this apologetic style the apologists are to be commended for their incisive criticisms of new religious beliefs or new age, and the commending of the gospel. However at times it appears as though their books are really only preaching to the already converted. Whilst that can be a helpful function of apologetics, in encouraging and bolstering belief, the issue of communicating with non-Christian devotees remains a big problem. The analysis of the devolution of culture and the connection between that and the loss of Christian belief speaks more on the wavelength of the Christian. In this respect apologists could indeed work from the scaffolding erected by Schaeffer and develop a more cogent analysis of the new age, as it is now a mainstream phenomenon in the

west. Yet it needs to be noted that the ethos of devotees of new age and new religions is such that their immediate interests and questions are not grounded in those broad cultural brushstrokes. Rather there is a pressing existential burden that devotees desire to have lifted, and often it is a pragmatic question of what "works" that is foremost in mind. Of course this does not mean that devotees have jumped on a hurdy-gurdy bandwagon where truth and passionate convictions are absent. Many devotees in new age are on a journey of self-discovery, experimenting with techniques that can give them power to live, a sense of the sacred in the routines of life, and a hope to look forward to.

Of course apologists also need to recognize that new age seekers find fault with Christian civilization generally and see it as suppressing spirituality in favor of rationalist constructs. So, the seeker celebrates the cultural devolution as being consistent with their vision of the need for the emergence of a renovated society. In simple blunt terms, "Christianity has passed its expiry date and adieu to it!" Whilst one might demolish that new age straw man portrait of Christianity there is a profound need, as has been intimated before in this essay, for apologists to go beyond merely refuting ideas or beliefs and to address the questions non-Christians are asking. By extension, we might also begin to ask whether we are individually and corporately living in a manner that truly embodies what Jesus taught. Does the world know we are truly his disciples?

6.2.2. Updating Cultural Apologetics

Allied to this is a concern expressed by missiologists such as Harold Netland. Netland has commented on the difficulty of translating western forms of apologetics into other cultural contexts. He states:

It is no secret that Christian leaders in the non-Western world are becoming increasingly critical of theology as it has been conducted in the West. Frequently the criticism of Western theology focuses upon its alleged indebtedness to Western philosophical influences and its seeming irrelevance to non-Western indigenous concerns. No doubt it is safe to say that few subjects are dismissed as irrelevant more readily than apologetics, which seems to many non-Westerners to be little more than a curious vestige of scholastic theology. How, it is asked, is studying the Thomistic arguments for God's existence relevant to someone ministering in a Muslim society where the reality of God is taken for granted? Or why should one working among Hindus be concerned with the subtleties of the intramural debate between 'presuppositionalists' and 'verificationists'? What could be more ludicrous than a Western missionary trying to prove the reality of miracles and the supernatural to Quecha Indians, whose



world throbs and pulsates with the reality of spiritual and sacred forces? Even those willing to admit a role for Christian apologetics in non-Western contexts are quick to emphasize that simply adopting Western apologetics is inadequate.²²⁰

Netland simply highlights then that much of our industriousness in apologetics is so culturally western it has little appeal or relevance in non-western cultures. Now in their defense it must be granted that several of the L'Abri apologists were primarily writing inside the West for a western audience. So it might seem a bit unfair to judge the effectiveness of their work in non-Western contexts. However with the transmission of religious thought and of groups from Asia to the West, we cannot ignore or overlook anymore those people from Asia who now live in the West. Our simplified western apologetics are ill suited for communicating with devotees whose traditional religious beliefs differ from the eastern-inspired but thoroughly westernized distant cousins in new age.

Robert Minor brought this into focus with respect to Hindu religions:

The more one studies the religions of others, the more one finds that there is nothing that all people who call themselves Hindus, for example, hold in common. There is, therefore, no 'essence' of Hinduism identifiable by historians. The 'Hinduism' of the Indian thinker Shankara (788-820), Advaita Vedanta, which is often used in brief surveys as the presentation of Hindu doctrine, is not to be found in a historical reading of the *Rigveda* (the earliest texts related to so-called 'Hinduism'). The *Rigveda* is often called *shruti* ('that which is heard'), indicating that it is supposedly normative for 'Hindus'. Shankara considers the many gods believed in by some 'Hindus' to be on a lower level of reality and not ultimately real, but the *Rigveda* believes the many gods to compose ultimate reality. The followers of Krishna *bhakti* ('devotion') in the main do not teach that the world is an illusion at all, as Shankara did. Therefore, a Christian apology that has focused on the 'Hindu' teaching that the world is *māyā* ('illusion') is wasted on any who know more about the beliefs of the religions of India than a western student who has read one book on 'Hinduism'. It is wasted on the 'Hindu' who worships Krishna and believes that the world is as real as you or I do.²²¹

Minor's comments in a related footnote to this paragraph observes about the Christian misunderstanding of Hindu thought as seamlessly subscribing to the doctrine of *māyā*:

This religious position is the one usually refuted in Christian apologetics. It is a minority view in India, though the view is found in many university philosophy departments there. To treat it as typical or the highest eastern thought is to ignore views that are more widely held. O. Guinness (*The East, No Exit* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1974], p. 30) does this, possibly because it is the view that westerners with whom he has spoken to have held. His works would have quite limited appeal to 'easterners.'²²²

So the global exchange between different cultures necessarily means that western Christians must come to grips with the global context of apologetics. As adherents of other religious systems now have settled in the west, we must jolly well take the time to understand first-hand what their views are, rather than writing about what we imagine they are or solely on the basis of what some westerners have done to commodify and reinterpret such beliefs. The Schaefferian mapwork is in need of being brought up to date, but also needs to be integrated into a holistic model that applies tools like pastoral care and counselling, ethics, and cross-cultural missiology.

7. Behavioralist Apologetics

The final model to be examined I have dubbed behaviorist apologetics. By this term I mean that some apologists agree with secular critics that new religions use brainwashing or mind control techniques to attract and retain converts. Unlike the previous five models that are justified by direct appeals to scripture, the behaviorist model originated in the 1950s.

7.1. Cold War Background

After the Maoist victory in 1949, the Marxist regime in Peking implemented a program of re-educating Chinese intellectuals whereby their thoughts were "cleansed" of western capitalist and imperialist ideologies. Those who had their thoughts cleansed underwent a "conversion" to Marxism. In the Korean War over 3,500 American servicemen were held as prisoners of war. During their imprisonment some servicemen were subjected to torture and in that process they were exposed to the same "thought reform" programs applied to Chinese intellectuals. Approximately 50 American servicemen made pro-communist statements and denounced US aggression in Korea. At the end of the Korean War 25 servicemen refused to be repatriated.



It was in 1951 that Edward Hunter, a journalist, coined the expression "Brainwashing" as a way of encapsulating what Chinese thought reform entailed. That term was quickly distributed into mainstream social discourse in the Cold War of the 1950s, and has remained entrenched at a grass roots level ever since.

Towards the end of the 1950s British psychiatrist William Sargant examined the behavioral dynamics of religious indoctrination, and found parallels between religious conversions and brainwashing.²²³ Around the same time Robert Jay Lifton began studying the phenomenon of Chinese thought reform techniques particularly with regards to the American POWs.²²⁴

7.1.1. Anti-Cult Movement & Brainwashing

During the late 1960s and into the 1970s secular critics began to apply the brainwashing paradigm to the phenomenon of cults. Alarmed parents invoked the term to explain behavioral changes in their children, and ex-devotees bore witness to their destructive experiences whilst members. In the midst of this ferment arose an anti-cult movement made up of ex-devotees, parents of children belonging to cults, and alarmed citizens. It was a social response to the new religions. Support groups began with FREECOG, followed later by the Cult Awareness Network and the American Family Foundation.²²⁵

In the 1970s an interventionist method of handling individual cult members developed known as deprogramming. This technique was made famous by Ted Patrick, who abducted devotees in order to de-brainwash them.²²⁶ Patrick and other deprogrammers however found themselves in legal skirmishes over civil rights and charges of kidnapping. Once this approach fell into disrepute due to its illegalities, other theorists propounded different views to brainwashing. However the notion of brainwashing had by that time slipstreamed into social discourse at large and remains a staple component of media exposés. Brainwashing and deprogramming also have found their way into the secular novels of Max Ehrlich, Anita Burgh, and Lloyd Davies.²²⁷ Although deprogramming has essentially fallen into disrepute, it is still used here and there by a few anti-cult activists.²²⁸

7.1.2. From Brainwashing to Mind Control

The new paradigm emphasizes the concept of mind-control, which was propounded by Steve Hassan. Hassan, who is Jewish, was deprogrammed out of the Unification Church. He holds a master's degree

in psychology and has developed his theory of cult mind control by building on Robert Jay Lifton's study into Chinese thought reform. According to Hassan, people do not join cults but are recruited.²²⁹ The process by which a person is recruited and becomes a full-blown devotee involves the group controlling members through:

- Control of behavior
- Control of thoughts
- Control of emotions
- Control of information.²³⁰

Hassan differentiates mind control from brainwashing. He indicates that brainwashing involves coercive abuse perpetrated on a prisoner by a jailer, and such coercion may involve sleep and food deprivation in conjunction with physical torture. Mind control, however, occurs in the context of one's peers. The devotee is not brutally treated and forced to convert or believe. Rather the devotee co-operates in the process of being indoctrinated. Hassan states:

"Mind control involves little or no overt physical abuse. Instead hypnotic processes are combined with group dynamics to create a potent indoctrination effect. The individual is deceived and manipulated - not directly threatened - into making the prescribed choices."²³¹

Hassan then prescribes a non-coercive remedy known as exit counseling.²³²

7.1.3. Other Models

Hassan's theory has some variants to it as evidenced in the writings of Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, Kay Porterfield, and Louise Samways.²³³ In the late 1970s Conway and Siegelman propounded a theory to account for cult conversions under the term "snapping". They believed that snapping was caused by "information disease".²³⁴ A prospective convert is bombarded with so much new information that is difficult to analytically process, but under the right forms of coercive group influence he or she "snaps" from normality and assumes the persona of a convert. Conway and Siegelman had concentrated most of their initial studies on cults, but in the early Reagan era turned their attention over to fundamentalist and evangelical Christians. In their analysis of Christian communication techniques they charted another phenomenon: emotional control.²³⁵

In *Blind Faith*, Kay Porterfield, whilst accepting much of what Hassan, Conway and Siegelman say, has added another factor into the equation: cults involve addictive co-dependent relationships. Louise Samways is



an Australian psychologist who follows many of the general points made by Hassan, but she also interprets cultic practices against the backdrop of popular psychology.

Other writers who support mind control theories based on Lifton's model include Raphael Aron, Michael Langone and Margaret Thaler Singer.²³⁶ Evangelical opponents of cults have also advocated the brainwashing/mind-control views at different times. Some have affirmed brainwashing, others mind-control concepts, with room for deprogramming or exit counseling as part of their response to cults.²³⁷

7.2. Assessment

Undoubtedly, claims about brainwashing and mind-control have proven to be very contentious issues in both secular and Christian circles. A polarization of viewpoints exists with secular and Christian advocates of mind-control, and secular and Christian opponents of mind-control.

There are two broad areas where great wrangling between both camps occurs:

- The validity of the brainwashing/mind-control paradigms
- The role played by some anti-brainwashing scholars who have appeared as expert witnesses in religious liberty court cases on behalf of a cultic group.

This discussion will be confined to the first issue only.

7.2.1. Brainwashing & Conversion

Proponents of the brainwashing/mind-control paradigms offer insights on human behavior, group dynamics and techniques of persuasion to account for religious conversions and indoctrination. Cult devotees who encounter this paradigm and later on deconvert may very well find it a useful plausibility structure around which they reinterpret their past experiences.

The late J.A.C. Brown offers a good illustration of how religious data is interpreted through the behavioral paradigm:

We must now turn to the more dramatic phenomena of conversion which are more akin to 'brainwashing' in their use of such stimuli as fasting, physical discomfort and scourging, the induction of panic fear, regulation of breathing as in Yoga, drumming, dancing, singing,

the use of incense or intoxicant drugs, and so on. It will be remembered that stirring up strong emotions of anxiety, guilt, or anger, causing mental conflicts, exhausting the individual mentally or physically, prolonging stress by leaving him in doubt for varying times without knowing what his fate is going to be, all bring about states of suggestibility in human beings just as they did in Pavlov's dogs. The fundamentalist Christian Evangelist employs three methods. Firstly, he never argues but inculcates beliefs by affirmation (Jesus is waiting for you!), by repetition (Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!), and by crowd contagion. Secondly, he utters terrible warnings of hellfire so that the possible non-existence of Hell never enters the listeners' minds. Thirdly, having induced fear and guilt in his audience, the evangelist tells them how they may be saved and as the agent of the divine holds out promises the fulfillment of which is never questioned. 'Repent and ye shall be saved.'²³⁸

William Sargant was a behavioral psychiatrist who followed the theories of Ivan Pavlov. Pavlov is best remembered for his experiments with dogs. He demonstrated that dogs could be trained to associate the offer of food with the ringing of a bell. After repeating this exercise several times the dogs in his experiment salivated at the sound of the bell. Sargant evidently accepted Pavlov's materialist philosophy, and was noted for applying electro-convulsive therapy on patients with mental illnesses. Sargant took a physiological stance in examining and interpreting human behavior. Perhaps an unacknowledged assumption of his was: since there is no God, why do people convert to religious beliefs? He certainly excluded the supernatural from the outset, claiming that the soul was the theologian's province. In *The Battle for the Mind* Sargant examined various forms of religious experience within Christianity such as Paul's Damascus Road conversion, the open air preaching of Wesley, and Billy Graham crusades. Sargant likened these things to the experience of shell shock experienced by soldiers in the First World War, implying that religious conversions were akin to a mental neurosis.²³⁹

7.2.1.1. Critical Deficiencies

The first weakness to note with the brainwashing model, as expressed by Brown and Sargant, is that there is a reductionist explanation for religious conversions. Sargant equated conversions with physiological responses made under stress. By isolating conversion data to the realm of physiological or neurological impulses, these theorists reduced conversion experiences down to forms of behavioral manipulation.

Larry Shinn observed that Sargant's work rests on the "now-discredited Pavlovian physiological explanations of the nature and effect of stress in conditioning."²⁴⁰ Shinn concluded that Sargant's "work still stands as the



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best example of the biological determinism model in psychology as it is applied to conversion." ²⁴¹

James Bjornstad pointed out that one needs a broad canvas and not a constricted grid such as the one Sargant used:

The phenomenon of conversion cannot and should not be viewed piecemeal - in terms of its common elements - but as an organic whole. Only when conversions are studied in their own world views can one really comprehend what each conversion is. In addition to that, one also has to consider the social setting and psychological aspects of the individual. Such a wholistic picture, then, provides the basis not only for comparison and contrast, but for truth and genuineness as well. ²⁴²

Chris Elkins, a former Moonie and now an evangelical, brings this personal insight to bear on the brainwashing model:

Brainwashing - in the sense of a forced program of personality change and indoctrination - is not at all the rule in the Unification Church, and I doubt that you could verify any instances of it at all. There is a difference between brainwashing and persuasion. I can vouch for the fact that most Moonies choose the Unification church of their own free will. I did. I'll admit that the persuasive powers of the Unification church are considerable, that their theology is ingenious, and that the propaganda that is unloaded upon a Moonie is substantial. But force is not used and there are no special brainwashing 'sessions' that a Moonie goes through in order to become a child of the rev. Moon. It is important to accept this truth if you are to deal with the Moonies in person. People who believe in the brainwashing theory sell short the strength and cleverness of the Unification Church. They are suggesting that the only way a reasonable person could possibly buy the claims of the Moonies is through force. They are saying that the power of the Unification Church is merely physical, not spiritual. Believe me, they are wrong! The brainwashing theory absolves people of responsibility. Ex-Moonies often claim they were brainwashed. But what better way to relieve the guilt and embarrassment of making such a colossal mistake with one's life? 'It was those evil cult leaders. I couldn't do anything about it!' ²⁴³

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe offer these summary remarks on brainwashing:

We reject the brainwashing thesis not only because it represents an attack upon religious conversion generally but also because there is considerable evidence that people join new religions of their own free will. We have four main sources of evidence about recruitment to cults. First, there are testimonies by ex-cult members who have totally repudiated the beliefs of the cult but strongly deny that they were trapped by techniques of mind control. Second, there are many parents, relatives, and friends of cult members who seem to understand that the person they knew chose to join the cult freely. Third, there are many studies by social scientists indicating that individuals have different conversion careers, which would suggest that the conversion process is voluntary. Finally, accounts of the cult members themselves often indicate that their decision to become members in new religions followed a long search not only for meaning but also for the resolution of major life crises.²⁴⁴

Some Christian contemporaries from the medical profession critically excoriated Sargant's position: Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Owen Brandon and Robert Ferm.²⁴⁵ Similarly, both sociologists of religion and religious studies scholars have found the whole brainwashing model to be most inadequate as a tool for comprehending conversions.²⁴⁶

Another subsidiary point is that the Damascus Road conversion that Paul experienced is not necessarily the norm for people who become Christians. John Drane has pointed out that most Christians in their spiritual walk probably have far more affinity with the up and down experiences of the apostle Peter. Jesus invited Peter to follow and Peter responds but before he really understands what such a commitment means (Matt. 4:18-19). During Jesus' ministry he finds himself compelled to reflect on what manner of man Jesus really is, and his awareness grows and deepens (Matt.14: 28-33). He has a flash of great understanding at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 16:15), is bowled over when Jesus is transfigured (Matt. 17:4ff) and yet failed to understand Jesus' mission to Jerusalem (Matt. 16:22-23). He put up some bravado at Jesus' arrest (John 18:10), but swiftly denies him (John 18:17). Jesus challenges him to a deeper commitment (John 21: 15-19). Yet he still needed emboldening (Acts 2), and had to confront his own prejudices about the Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 8 & 10). His rollercoaster ride of faith, with highs and lows, is probably a more consistent picture of what many Christians experience too.²⁴⁷ In considering Peter's conversion we do not find the sorts of elements that lend themselves to Sargant's reductionist grid.



7.2.1.2. Beliefs vs Experience

One of the inherent problems with the brainwashing model is that its secular exponents tended to put the emphasis on the primacy of religious group experiences over against the content of the beliefs. This sort of problem was highlighted in the nineteenth century religious psychology of William James (but it must be noted he was not an advocate of brainwashing):

If the psychiatrist follows James in assuming (as not a few do) that immediate religious experiences are primary, and theological opinions are merely mental wallpaper laid over these experiences, then he will be blind to such realistic situations as the following: (a). The common case where a harmful theology, rather than a harmful experience, is the root of the psychological difficulty. For example, the Christian Scientist's refusal, on theological grounds, to see evil in the world can be the cause of more neurotic crackups than any 'experience' the Christian Scientist might have. The Jamesian psychologist, however, will be looking in the attic for the termites while the latter are boring away in the cellar. (b). The even more common case where the patient's theology is ennobling and edifying, but he has become neurotic through refusing to admit a lack of conformity to his theology or a refusal to conform to it as he knows he should. One thinks immediately of cases of marital infidelity on the part of those who have been unable to 'shake' the Christian ethic. The Jamesian analyst will be prone to suggest that the patient rid himself of his secondary overbelief rather than conform his emotional life to his theology or ethic.²⁴⁸

Clearly, a balance is needed in any analysis between the beliefs and practices of a group.

7.2. Christians Targeted

Another concern is that Christians have at times been classified by some critics as being either "brainwashed" or under "mind-control". In the late 1970s Jewish-Christian convert Ken Levitt recounted his experience of being abducted by a deprogrammer.²⁴⁹ In 1983 Randy Frame reported in *Christianity Today* how Christian members of para-church ministries had been the targets of deprogrammers.²⁵⁰ Ronald Enroth and William Alnor, who have some modified sympathies for the mind-control thesis, have nonetheless drawn attention to ethical problems they perceive with

the actions of some exit counsellors. They illustrate a few cases where Christians have been the target of exit counsellors.²⁵¹

It is also somewhat ironic but the brainwashing thesis has also been applied by leading new age writer Dick Sutphen to discredit Christian preaching.²⁵²

7.2.1. Conway & Siegelman on Evangelicals

In addition to these actual cases, apologists must also confront the position taken by Conway and Siegelman about emotional control. They prefaced remarks about their findings in *Holy Terror*:

Of course, *Holy Terror* was not an attack on any religion or party. It was the next step Flo and I knew we had to take - and I must say, with some grave concerns on our part - in our exploration of the widening use of new communication techniques and technologies to gain power and control over millions in the name of religion. Both of us had been confronted at every turn in our work by disturbing parallels between the cults and America's massive born-again movement.²⁵³

This is their statement about what constitutes emotional control:

In *Holy Terror* we distinguished the fundamentalist right method as one, not of mind control, but of a separate strategy we call 'emotional control'. In contrast to cult rituals that target basic powers of thinking and decision making, the techniques of emotional control target bedrock feelings of fear, guilt, love, hate, anger and other universal human responses. Fundamentalist right leaders use the vivid words and images of the Bible to command unwavering belief and obedience in their followers, to stir primal fears and induce overwhelming born-again moments and emotional experiences. Emotional control is the engine of the fundamentalist right machine and the core control in most fundamentalist sects.²⁵⁴

Conway and Siegelman then present the following illustrations derived from the discipleship booklets published by the para-church ministries The Navigators and Campus Crusade for Christ:

Some fundamentalist sects use the strategy to suppress their followers' feelings altogether - just as the cults strive to suppress people's thoughts. The Navigators' Scripture memory and Meditation program plants the suggestion in subtle ways: 'Alas, it is this that deceives you, for your heart is the worst part.' Campus Crusade doesn't beat around the bush. Its Four Spiritual Laws proselytizing



pamphlet closes with the explicit command: 'DO NOT DEPEND ON FEELINGS!' For those who waver, as in the cults, the sect's non-stop 'spiritual breathing' technique effectively stills any remaining doubts or fears.²⁵⁵

Here Conway and Siegelman have quoted material out of context. In the case of the Navigators material the context makes it clear that the heart does not refer to 'emotions' at all. The context concerns human sinfulness which the Bible uses a variety of words to describe such as 'heart', 'flesh' etc. In the case of the *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet, whatever defects it may have as an evangelistic tool, the passage quoted by Conway and Siegelman has been totally misunderstood. At the end of the booklet the reader is invited to make a commitment to Christ and a diagram of a steam engine with a carriage is drawn. The diagram attempts to picture the relationship between facts, feelings and faith. The booklet in context cautions the reader against mistaking feelings for what Jesus Christ accomplished in his atoning death on the cross. Similarly the concept of spiritual breathing is decontextualized. Spiritual breathing is a metaphor for Christians on confessing sin and acknowledging Christ's forgiveness. The Christian metaphorically breathes out sins in confession and breathes in faith the forgiveness of Christ.

Hexham and Poewe warned evangelicals of the need for discernment in these terms:

Evangelicals welcomed Conway and Siegelman's book *Snapping* because it was a direct attack upon the Moonies and their leader. They completely ignored a short statement on page 46 that equates the conversion practices of the Moonies with those of evangelical Christians. In their latest book, *Holy Terror* (1982), however, Conway and Siegelman press their attack upon evangelicals directly, insisting that conversion is a form of snapping or brainwashing not only among would-be new religionists but also among would-be evangelical Christians.²⁵⁶

We might ponder then: with anti-cult friends like this who needs any enemies? We might also give thought to the anti-cult standpoints being adopted in various European states and their ramifications for restricting both evangelical churches and cults.²⁵⁷

7.3. Polarized Apologists

There is no unanimity between Christian apologists on the subject of mind control. Craig Branch, Paul Martin, David Clark and Ronald Enroth argue for the validity of mind-control, while Francis Beckwith, Alan Gomes, Jon Trott, and Bob and Gretchen Passantino argue against it.²⁵⁸ The breach between the camps is over whether people in cults are converted and indoctrinated either through brainwashing or mind control methods. Some of the acute differences, tensions and perceptions between the Christian camps are tabulated as follows:

ANTI-MIND CONTROL:	PRO-MIND CONTROL:
Social scientists have refuted mind control.	Psychologists have proved mind control.
Mind control methods are allegedly irresistible.	There are varying degrees of mind control, and it is not irresistible.
Devotees are portrayed as passive victims.	Devotees willingly submit.
Personal responsibility for sin is denied.	Devotees suffer from diminished capacity.
Many leave cults of their own accord.	Many find it hard to decide to leave.
Evangelism is the remedy.	Counseling first, evangelism afterwards.

I do not propose to try and resolve this debate here. However I would suggest that there are issues that ought to be addressed. Perhaps these issues could be approached from different angles to those used thus far.

One of the starting planks might be for some rapprochement being reached over the negative experiences and stories recounted by former devotees. Two utterly extreme polar positions are:

- Any apostate's story can be disregarded because it is propaganda.
- Nothing worthwhile ever happens to people who belong to a cult.

Both positions are untenable and the truth about what happens to people in cults lies somewhere in the middle. First of all we must follow the basic legal principle which allows a witness to tell his or her story. We cannot legitimately rule out of court all apostate stories as being unreliable. What we must do is listen first, and then cross-examine the story for palpable bias.

7.3.1. A Critical Exercise



We need to cultivate critical discernment about how individuals construct their stories and the social contexts in which they relate them. What sort of interpretative grid is the ex-devotee using to present his or her story? As a reflective exercise that could illustrate this point, we could compare and contrast the story of three ex-Moonies Deanna Durham (*Life Among the Moonies*), Chris Elkins (*Heavenly Deception*), and Steve Kemperman (*Lord of the Second Advent*).²⁵⁹

How do these three former Moonies, all of whom are now evangelicals, interpret their experiences in the Unification Church? What drew them into the Unification Church? Do they emphasize personal choices being freely made in their time in the group? What emphasis is placed on brainwashing or mind control? How much emphasis is placed on spiritual deception, Satan and the demonic? What role do they ascribe in their life to the theology of the group? Are there episodes reflecting spiritual abuse? Do the ex-devotees depict their participation in the cult as one of passive obedience couched in language that magnifies the evils of the group but glosses over personal accountability? Why does Durham refer to mind control? Does Kemperman's experience of being deprogrammed color his interpretation of life as a Moonie? Why does Elkins reject claims that the Moonies brainwash people? Could these ex-Moonies' stories be likened to that of a reformed smoker at a smoker's convention? Are their stories straight reportage or have they engaged in a reinterpretation of events in view of their conversion?

After sifting through those questions we might then take a look at the discussions that took place in the late 1970s between evangelicals and members of the Unification Church, and reflect on how those Moonies responded to questions and challenges.²⁶⁰ Did they prevaricate or tackle the questions with integrity? What impressions are conveyed by the Moonies in those discussions as compared with the portrait of the Moonies given by Durham, Elkins and Kemperman? In view of the discourses and answers given by the Moonies who were in dialogue with evangelicals, how do their presentations of Unification theology compare with the descriptions of doctrines presented by evangelical apologists such as John Allan, James Bjornstad, Everett Hunt, Zola Levitt, Walter Martin and Jerry Yamamoto?²⁶¹

What conclusions can be drawn from this exercise with respect to understanding the experiences of these particular devotees? What light can it throw on the debate over spiritual abuse, mind control, personal responsibility and the task of apologetics and mission?

7.3.2. Can Any Good Thing Come From Cults?

As apologists we quite rightly emphasize the doctrinal gulf that separates Christians from the cults. In the behavioral apologetic model much attention is focused on the group dynamics and how devotees become dreadfully damaged.²⁶² The issue of spiritual abuse cannot be shoved under the rug. However, even with the clarifications given by Christian apologists, such as Lawrence Pile, I believe the paradigm of mind control is an unhelpful one. At its simplest it evokes a popular "zombie" image, and (rightly or wrongly) does leave itself open to charges of reductionism, and the downplaying personal sin. Perhaps a better paradigm and metaphor could be constructed by studies undertaken from the perspective of pastoral theology (see below).

Now without dismissing the bad stories or minimizing the ultimate theological truth question about God's unique revelation in Christ, we might still need to ask questions about the experiences of devotees. Is life in the cults uniformly bad? Do participants in cults ever learn anything worthwhile about life and their personal needs to develop and grow in maturity? Are there any life-skills gained from being in a cult? For example, think of the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons who interact with complete strangers door-to-door on a regular basis - what communication skills are gained and is this a positive thing for personal growth? Do people who have been trained in human potential seminars find themselves confronting issues about their personal life and relationships that leads to positive outcomes? Do Christians ever confront in themselves the sorts of issues that human potential seminars challenge their adherents about?

To this I might add three anecdotal examples of former new age devotees I know who attest to the fact that they found themselves helped along life's way.

- Matthew had a Roman Catholic childhood in Sydney, but abandoned this as a teenager. In his teen years he adopted an atheist outlook and identified with the heavy-metal music culture. In his university studies Matthew discarded atheism and began his own do-it-yourself exploration of Zen-based meditation, combined with environmental activism and an interest in crystals. Matthew came into contact with evangelical Christians and eventually came to faith in Christ. Matthew indicates that if it had not been for his awakened interest in meditation, crystals and the environment, he seriously doubts that he would have had a willingness to reconsider Christianity. For him, his meditative spirituality kicked him along into a



journey of deep reflection about life's ultimate meaning and purpose, so that by the time he met up with evangelicals he was primed and ready for the disciplined walk of following Christ.

- Esther was born into a strict Christian family in Canada, but at the age of 17 overturned what she found to be a rigid, narrow-minded outlook. She found her way into eastern forms of meditation and relaxation, and attended a number of human potential seminars. Through both her meditative experiences and the human potential courses, Esther found that she had to confront areas in her life where she suffered from stunted growth. For her new age prepared the way for her as an adult to reconsider the gospel.
- Robert had had a childhood spent in a traditional Sydney evangelical Christian family and church setting. However as a teenager he typically asserted himself over against his parent's authority as well as drifting away from his family's hand-me-down faith. He was a lazy university student, lacking proper motivation and maturity. A friend of his invited Robert to attend an introductory meeting of The Forum. Robert gravitated to the Forum's precepts about taking responsibility for one's life, and rejecting the role of behaving as a victim. He felt invigorated by these new challenges and confronted some of his personal weaknesses. He approached his parents and sought reconciliation with them over past actions, and his university grades began to rapidly improve. Robert's parents were initially enthused by his change of heart but became alarmed when they found out about The Forum. Meanwhile a friend of Robert's shared the gospel with him on a few occasions and he eventually came to faith. Robert recognized there were metaphysical flaws in The Forum, but also acknowledged that it had helped to overcome some difficulties in his life. He began a journey of reflection through The Forum that gave him the motivation to reassess his life. In the course of that reassessment he not only intuited flaws in The Forum, but also came to see how he truly was in God's sight as the gospel was presented to him. Robert, like Esther and Matthew, found new age a stepping-stone rather than a complete obstacle to reconsidering the Christian message.²⁶³

7.4. Pastoral Theology & Care

With all the wrangles that ensue over the mind control debate, I believe there is a vital but missing ingredient. The missing ingredient from countercult ministry in general is that we have not integrated into our

work the contributions of pastoral theology and the need for pastoral care in ministry to devotees and former devotees. Now there may be some rumbles to this assertion on the part of those associated with the Wellspring Retreat & Resource Center. I am not dismissing their contributions to counseling ministry at all.

Rather my plea is that there is a whole menu of issues raised by the mind control debate that could be more properly handled through the framework of pastoral theology. Once again there is insufficient space to delve into this, so I will merely "flag" this as an issue for readers to begin thinking about. An anecdotal example that partly touches on my plea comes from Chris Elkins. As noted above he was a Moonie for two-and-a-half years. His family had planned on a deprogramming intervention. This did not take place, but Elkins recounts:

"My parents had broken down. They'd never told anybody - not the pastor, no one in the church - what I had done. For 2 1/2 years they suffered alone. A lot of parents do that because they fear the reaction of other people especially if they're in the church. The church can be very harsh on its own people. So my parents planned to kidnap and deprogram me. But I discovered it about twenty-four hours before it was to take place and got away. They then broke down and told the church what was going on. That little church started praying for me. Ten days later I left. I walked away. I can't tell you that there were giant theological convictions at the time. There really were not. I didn't know why I had to leave. I knew I couldn't go to Mom and Dad; they would still have had me deprogrammed. I knew I didn't need that, so I didn't go to them. I went to a friend from Atlanta, and that helped me get things together."²⁶⁴

Elkins' family was in need of pastoral care, and that in turn can only flow out from a clear understanding of servanthood on the part of lay Christians. For ministers and theologians alike linkages between pastoral theology and basic forms of counseling need to be brought over into the field of countercult ministry. Perhaps the nearest we have come to this issue being on the agenda came in the now out-of-print book by the Baptist pastor Glenn Igleheart, *Church Members and Nontraditional Religious Groups*.²⁶⁵ I suggest that we have many people who have fine credentials and experience in pastoral theology and care, but who are unacquainted with the field of the cults. It is also the case that there are many competent people who are knowledgeable about the cults, but generally lack the qualifications and experience in pastoral theology and care. It may be a very elementary even naïve sounding proposal: but could we possibly make an effort to start up some dialogue between countercult apologists and experts in pastoral theology? Perhaps if



[sacredtribes]

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countercult ministries could be irrigated by the tremendous insights and experience of pastoral theologians, we might just be able to fit the golden slipper on Cinderella's foot and see some forward progress in the mission of the church generally.

OTHER CRITICAL CROSSCURRENTS

It is time to leave aside all the models, and note some other critical issues we need to address over the effectiveness of our apologetic material.

8.1. Bibliographical Errors

A few writers have created bibliographical citation errors or misrepresent the views of those they are critiquing. This can be compounded by unsound or invalid styles of argumentation. The examples cited here are not designed to put the spotlight on any particular apologist, but rather to illustrate the point. The lessons we learn here should goad us to redouble our efforts to provide quality documentation and the best possible case for our beliefs.

8.1.2. Reference Errors

A simple example of a bibliographical error may be found in the first chapter of the popular book *Understanding the Occult*.²⁶⁶ The authors address the question about what kinds of people are attracted to the occult, and in the course of their discussion draw upon an essay by W. Elwyn Davies. The bibliographical citation given by the authors to Davies's essay reads:

W. Elwyn Davies, in *Principalities and Powers*, edited by John Warwick Montgomery, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1976, pp. 303, 304.

The error, albeit a minor one, concerns the book's title. John Warwick Montgomery is the sole author of *Principalities and Powers*, which was published in 1973.²⁶⁷ Davies's essay appeared in *Demon Possession*, a book Montgomery edited in 1976.²⁶⁸ This might seem to be a trifling error and almost a waste of time pointing to. However the problem is compounded because another popular apologist has replicated the error by relying on the secondary source instead of going directly to the original essay.²⁶⁹

A lack of precision in citing material correctly does not enhance the reputation of countercult apologists among their peers, with non-Christian scholars and with devotees of the faiths we are seeking to

persuade about the truth of the gospel. Moreover this little example ought to act as a cautionary reminder about the need to go directly to the original and primary sources rather than obtaining our primary quotes from secondary evangelical books.

We must also not be naïve to think that the *quantity* of footnotes in a book or essay necessarily corresponds to profound research or valid evidence. Immanuel Velikovsky's books were densely footnoted, but as Edwin Yamauchi pointed out Velikovsky's evidence and interpretations were often scholastically untenable.²⁷⁰ The same point held true for Erich von Däniken's *Chariots of the Gods?*²⁷¹

Similarly with our own literature on new religious movements or world religions, what matters most is not the quantity but the quality of the material being resourced when forming our reports and arguments. We need to cultivate a discerning, critical palate about the evidential worth of the sources we draw on, be they written or oral. In this regard we can all benefit from studying the critical skills of historians and lawyers in assessing primary and secondary forms of evidence, and from logicians in how to assemble cogent arguments.²⁷²

Hexham, in his critical survey of evangelical books on New Age, made these observations:

There is a tendency among Evangelical writers to misuse footnotes. As a result many Evangelical books use quotations from known Evangelical writers to add authority rather than information. Such a use of authorities is fallacious. But, the abuse of footnotes goes even further. A surprising number of Evangelical writers seem to think that footnotes in and of themselves make a work scholarly, when, in fact, it is the quality of the footnote that really matters. As a result it is common practice for Evangelical books to give a footnote which, instead of actually citing the primary source, simply notes a secondary source said to contain the original. It never seems to occur to them that the authorities they are referring to may have been misquoted by the secondary source they are using. Such lack of care makes their work of dubious scholarly value.²⁷³

8.2. Plagiarism

Another drawback is when an author becomes lazy in composition and instead of creating a genuine piece of original writing, uplifts material from other books in a scissors and paste fashion and then passes it off as his or her own. A similar tendency with a scissors and paste job is where the writer uplifts verbatim material from a source, fails to show it is a proper quotation, but slips in a footnote in a manner suggesting the ideas



were inspired by that source. Those who follow this practice presumably work on the bluff that most readers will not bother to cross check things but take it all at face value. This is a disturbing problem that occurs quite a bit in a rather major monograph on New Age spirituality written by a respected and retired theologian.²⁷⁴ A minor case of plagiarism can also be detected in an anti-occult, anti-New Age novel set in Australia.²⁷⁵

8.3. Quotations Out-of-Context

Some pop apologists undermine their own case by taking quotations out of context and placing the worst possible construction on the material cited. The following is an illustration of the technical point under discussion here - namely whether the material cited is in context and correctly represented. The apologists in this example are arguing about the encroachment of eastern mystical versions of meditation inside the Christian church and in the course of their argument cite Robert Schuller's *Peace of Mind Through Possibility Thinking*.²⁷⁶ Here then is the apologists' exact citation of what they draw from Schuller's book:

A variety of approaches to meditation is employed by many different religions as well as by various non-religious mind-control systems. In all forms of TM, Zen Buddhism, or Yoga or of meditation of Judaeo-Christian tradition the meditator endeavors to overcome the distractions of the conscious mind. It is important to remember that meditation in any form is harnessing, by human means, of God's divine laws. We are endowed with a great many powers and forces that we do not yet fully understand. The most effective mantras employ the "M" sound. You can get the feel of it by repeating the words, "I am, I am," many times over. Transcendental Meditation or TM is not a religion nor is it necessarily anti-Christian. [TM is in fact pure Hinduism, and will lead to eternal separation from Christ. See *The Cult Explosion* for details.]²⁷⁷

Now for the purposes of my analysis the issue is not about whether Schuller's view of TM is correct. The issue, readers please note, is whether the apologists who have cited Schuller have quoted him in context and not misrepresented what he originally stated in his book.

Here are the critical points to note. The apologists' citation from Schuller's book, in the hardback edition, is located on pages 115-116. If we compare what the apologists have cited with the text of Schuller's book we discover some serious problems with their quotation. It needs to

be noted that the first and third paragraphs cited by the apologists come from page 115, while the second paragraph cited is from page 116. This alters the original context of Schuller's thought and casts his views in the worst possible light. Such an alteration of material, which has paragraphs juxtaposed in a negative manner, is simply poor scholarship. It also means that intervening paragraphs have also been omitted by the apologists, material which when examined puts Schuller in a different perspective from the one proposed by the apologists.

The next observation concerns the apologists' generous use in punctuation of the ellipsis (i.e. the use of " ") when omitting words and phrases. When an author uses the ellipsis it is usually the case that seemingly extraneous material is omitted so that a compressed or concise quotation can be given. However the author is intentionally flagging for readers that some material has been left out, and therefore the reader should really refer back to the original source for the full context. In this particular case the apologists have used the ellipsis to create the disturbing impression that Schuller is endorsing TM. Let us go back to Schuller's own text and compare it with the apologists' third paragraph:

The most effective mantras employ the "M" sound. You can get the feel of it by repeating the words, "I am, I am," many times over. The vibrating hum mounts from your lips through your head to the vicinity of your brain. The vibrations relax the mind even as a vibrating barber chair or vibrating bed relaxes muscles. The "mantra" has been and is being widely discussed through the advocates of one of the most successfully merchandized forms of meditation. I refer to Transcendental Meditation or TM, as it is commonly called. It is not a religion nor is it necessarily anti-Christian. It is, however, commercially non-Christian. It does not integrate into its practice the dynamic love and positive power of Jesus Christ. For this reason I advocate the Meditation that Christ practiced. I call it: PTM, or Possibility Thinking Meditation.²⁷⁸

If we look back to the apologists' citation we see what has been omitted. Also note how their quote cuts off at a crucial sentence, "It is not a religion nor is it necessarily anti-Christian." Apologists can quite rightly question Schuller's ignorance about TM presenting certain Hindu concepts. However, to be fair the original text shows that immediately after this cited sentence Schuller is not endorsing TM at all. Indeed Schuller goes on to make a further distinction between TM and Christian meditation:



[sacredtribes]

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I am often asked the difference between PTM (Possibility Thinking Meditation) and TM (Transcendental Meditation). The difference is Jesus Christ.²⁷⁹

Schuller concluded his discussion in these terms:

Meaningless mantras repeated over and over will never be as effective as Christian meditation which brings Jesus Christ's love into our daily lives. For the love of Jesus Christ is unequalled in its ability to produce peace at a very deep level. When you meditate as a Christian you focus on Him. You don't need another guru if you have Jesus Christ in your life. Join me then in becoming a PTM, Possibility Thinking Meditator.²⁸⁰

The issue we have focused on here is that of the accuracy or integrity of the material quoted - was it in context and was it fairly represented? By examining the original text cited we discovered that the apologists had manipulated the quoted material in such a manner that cast a pall over Schuller to the point where it ran counter to what Schuller stated. It is not a question of whether I agree with Schuller's theology (which is a separate matter altogether). What has to be honestly faced is the distortion of material quoted by two apologists. The way they mishandled the quotation is the focal point. The relevance of this illustration becomes more acute when we acknowledge the level of popular consumption of books by the apologists in question. A pop writer can exert a great impact on shaping the attitudes and perceptions of lay readers, and in this particular instance the apologists soon found themselves locking horns with other Christian writers.²⁸¹ My example is but one of many more that could be noted from these two apologists, but that critical exercise has already been undertaken by a Canadian in his doctoral dissertation, and Francis Beckwith and Stephen Parrish have also documented some logical drawbacks in the arguments of these two apologists.²⁸²

8.4. The Lone Ranger Syndrome

In the 1950s on TV the deeds of a children's cowboy hero known as the Lone Ranger were portrayed. The Lone Ranger was accompanied by an Indian called Tonto (a Spanish word meaning "stupid"), and together they dealt out punishment where the law-enforcement authorities had failed or they brought criminals to justice.²⁸³ One feature of this genre of television story telling is the hero, although not against the law, often works outside conventional law enforcement to bring about justice. The

Lone Ranger is almost a law unto himself, even though he may scrupulously observe the spirit of the law. His sidekick Tonto was a loyal, faithful companion, but as his name indicates he was "stupid" because he was in the presence of the great Lone Ranger. The Lone Ranger could teach Tonto, but Tonto could not teach the Lone Ranger.

My invoking the Lone Ranger has nothing to do with childhood nostalgia, but serves as a useful illustration for apologists. We apologists need to be alert to our vulnerability in becoming like the Lone Ranger. The great temptation we face is to crusade against all manner of errors and yet fail to apply the blowtorch on ourselves. Maybe Tonto can speak back and for a change we might have something to learn.

Here Hobart Freeman (1920-1984) offers us a salutary case study in learning how easy it is for some who is versed in apologetics and the heresy-rationalist model to go off the rails.

Freeman professed faith in Christ in 1952 and undertook study at Georgetown College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention during much of the 1950s, but he was also exceedingly loath to celebrate Christmas and Easter as he felt these were tainted with paganism. Freeman severed his ties with the Baptists and affiliated with the Brethren churches. He commenced doctoral studies at Grace Theological Seminary in 1959, graduating in 1961. He became part of the faculty and taught Old Testament studies, ethics and philosophy.

Freeman found fault with the Brethren churches over various issues including the observance of Christmas and Easter. He was dismissed from Grace Theological Seminary in 1963 and expelled from the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches. He then commenced a home church group that resembled the Brethren. In 1966 he encountered Pentecostal and Charismatic teachings and in the 1970s established his own church known as the Faith Assembly. With the development of this congregation, Freeman increasingly aligned himself with the theology known as "positive confession" or "Word-Faith movement" as promulgated by Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland.²⁸⁴ However it should be noted that Freeman also differentiated himself from other Word-Faith teachers. Whereas other Word-Faith teachers usually acknowledge the place and relevance of orthodox medical treatment, Freeman was opposed to consulting doctors for any form of treatment.²⁸⁵

Now Freeman was versed in the rudiments of apologetics and he combined both the heresy-rationalist and spiritual warfare models in his book *Every Wind of Doctrine*.²⁸⁶ In this book he tackled, *inter alia*,



twenty-seven different cults or liberal theological views, and some thirty-two occult practices or ideologies. Freeman stated in the book's introduction:

It is the purpose of this book to provide Christians with the *answers* to many of the questions which they desire solutions to concerning the present-day religious situation. I have presented each question as thoroughly and concisely as possible, clearly setting forth the exact *meaning* of each subject, as well as its *errors*, and how it is in *disagreement* with the Scriptures.²⁸⁷

The irony is that despite's Freeman's commitment to the authority of the Bible and his concern to protect Christians from heresy, he taught doctrines at variance with the Bible and the historic Christian faith. Now this observation about Freeman *cannot* be logically construed to mean that because he promulgated aberrant teachings this somehow shows that the heresy-rationalist apologetic model is inherently flawed. However what it does bring into sharp focus is the problem of accountability and the need for peer review of one's writings and ministry.

Sadly Freeman cut his ties with much of the wider Body of Christ and although he was prepared to criticize the cults and Christian denominations for doctrinal defects, he cocooned his own teachings from the scrutiny of others. The more he found fault with other denominations the more aberrant his own doctrines seemed to become. He appeared to isolate himself from any meaningful exchanges with Christians in other denominations. In the absence of any willingness to accept peer review he was bereft of critical encouragement and accountability to the wider Body of Christ. Ironically then he was unable to perceive that in various ways he had taken on the very same set of obstinate characteristics he identified in the cults. He could detect heresy in the cults but was blind to the aberrational content and humanly damaging consequences of his own eccentric teachings about healing.

One lesson for apologists to learn then is that we need to cultivate personal humility about our own ministries, and be willing to submit ourselves unreservedly to the scrutiny of fellow Christians. Here I do not only mean that our ministries ought to have administrative boards to whom we render an account or have our financial transactions professionally audited, but that we are also willing to listen to our peers in church and in other para-church ministries about both our behavior and our teaching. Freeman's life and ministry surely ought to arrest our

attention and serve to warn us that any one of us may be prone to aberrant doctrine or aberrant practices.

Douglas Groothuis perhaps captured it best when writing about the connection between apologetics and humility he exhorted:

"It is dangerously easy for apologists to become prideful when we identify the truth with our ego instead of with God himself. Instead of contending for 'the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints' (Jude 3), we may end up contending for our own infallibility."²⁸⁸

What Groothuis touched on may very well irritate the nerves of some of us, and if it does then is our over-sensitivity to personal scrutiny a sign that we too might be in danger of losing the plot as a servant of Christ? If we are prepared to look at ourselves we might begin to detect ungodly elements woven into the fabric of our personalities. A deep-seated rigidity and inflexibility to receive critical appraisal of our attitudes would be one such instance. Another would be where we get such an adrenalin rush from verbal jousts with cult devotees that we revel in the thrill of winning an argument but lose sight of Christ's kingdom commissions. Do we ever exhibit behavioral patterns where we can be biting in our criticisms of others and yet "cry foul" when others subject us to the same sort of criticism? If we are resistant to or refuse to believe that our own publications could stand some improvement, then do we not run the risk of manifesting the very same characteristics we find fault with when cult devotees engage in deliberate avoidance of our arguments and evidences? Perhaps we need to reflect once more on Groothuis' salutary reminder that the belligerent will not inherit the earth.²⁸⁹

As a fellow evangelical apologist Douglas Groothuis offers us advice to take to heart about our attitude and mindset. Are we prepared to listen to a fellow brother?

Concluding Remarks

In this third installment of the essay much ground has been traversed, and yet I do not pretend to say that my analysis is exhaustive. Space has prohibited me from bringing up many more examples, and from addressing the sorts of questions observers outside of evangelical circles have raised about our apologetic competence. It is easy to find fault with existing approaches. However it would be irresponsible to simply leave matters here. So, in the fourth and final installment I shall refocus the discussion on the development of a holistic, integrated approach to the cults that is missiological in nature.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CONTEXT



[sacredtribes]

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With the advent of the third millennium and the twenty-first century AD, western Christians find themselves increasingly feeling like strangers in a strange land. Until very recent times African primal religions, Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic and Taoist beliefs seemed to belong in the remote parts of the earth where missionaries went to preach. A few Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims could be found living in the West, but they were confined to migrant sub-communities that seemed obscure to mainstream society. We mostly thought the same way about Western-based groups like Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons. They existed on the fringe and were inconsequential in the large scheme of things, unless you happened to be a resident of Utah. For most Christians the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons were the proverbial pain-in-the-neck with their missionaries knocking on our front doors at inconvenient moments.

However the context in which we live in the twenty-first century is quite different. Although church affiliation rates are presumably quite strong in many parts of the United States of America, the processes of religious diversification are well underway there as other spiritual stories vie for attention alongside the gospel. Those who live in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and many parts of Europe, are keenly aware that their respective cultures have long since ceased to be "Christian". Christians are exiles who inhabit a culture that their spiritual forebears had built, but which has changed hands and now is shared among others.

My allusion to Christians being spiritual exiles in the culture created by their forebears might sound disturbing to some. However if we return to the scriptures we might be able to take some new bearings on our own time. We could look at how the children of Israel coped with living in exile, and in what ways their faith was challenged and strengthened. We could then move to the Book of Acts. There we could rediscover how the first Christians coped with living in the multi-cultural, religiously diverse Roman Empire. We could examine how the first Christians, as a minority faith, interacted with people of other faiths and other cultures. If we reflect on the scriptures and then examine our own time afresh, we might find it is not as daunting a task to become missionaries inside our own homelands. We might also see that becoming missionaries to the new religions is not so strange an idea after all.

Now in order to set the scene for propounding a missiological model, it would be prudent for us to first have some clarity about the broad global context we find ourselves in. As we look at the big canvas, our

discussion can be progressively refined and focused on how to develop a holistic missiological model for proclaiming and defending the gospel, and making disciples from the new tribes that live side by side us.

9. Global Context

We find ourselves living in circumstances that are global and where the opportunities to share the gospel are unprecedented. Through our communications and transport systems, the world beyond our homes is within easy reach. We peer into the outside world every evening through TV news broadcasts. We tap into almost instantaneously through the Internet. Within a matter of hours we can fly from one hemisphere of the earth to the other. Our local neighbourhood may also offer us the cuisine, culture and cosmologies of many nations. If we want to share Jesus with non-Christians they are at our doorsteps with their strange gods and alternative altars.

We have certainly not become the global village that Canadian communications specialist Marshall McLuhan imagined.²⁹⁰ The reason being that a village implies a close-knit community where people know and care for one another. Our technology does allow us to transcend geographical barriers that keep people apart. However if we think about how we behave as we use our technological "toys" we are not a village. The recent phenomenon of "reality TV" brings into acute focus the fact that we are more like "global voyeurs" rather than communicants in a caring global village. With the mere finger pressure on the TV remote control we can switch off the news and be inured to the sufferings of those who live in faraway places. Likewise with a quick click of the mouse we can jump from web-site to web-site and remain unmoved by what is happening to others.

Marcello Zago has remarked:

Emerging religious encounters are part of the socio-religious context in the world today, a world that is characterized by globalization and religious pluralism. It is not merely an accident that interreligious dialogue has come into its own in this century [i.e. twentieth] and in conditions of religious pluralism, first of all in Asia and later elsewhere. We can foresee that in the coming millennium the tendency toward globalization and religious pluralism will increase and will give rise to meetings and even clashes among the various religions.²⁹¹

Zago indicates that the matrix through which contact between the world's religions occurs is one shaped by processes known as globalization.



Mervyn Bendle provides a very helpful summary description of what is globalization:

Globalization involves at least two powerful processes that operate in tension with each other. (1) The **centripetal** tendency is towards increased centralization, integration and order, especially within global capitalism and those economic and political institutions (IMF, World Bank, G-7, GATT, etc.) that are responsive to it. (2) The **centrifugal** tendency, which is towards increased disintegration and disorder, especially amongst those (often-marginalised) groups and institutions that define themselves culturally in religious, ethnic and nationalist terms. At the same time as economic and political power is being centralized in accordance with various universalist principles there is a world-wide countervailing re-assertion of cultural localism and religious, ethnic and nationalist particularism. These contra-dynamics reflect the inability of a distantly managed global economic system to provide a sense of meaning and identity. Quite the contrary: as the lives and destinies of individuals and their families are effected [sic] and even destroyed by decisions and processes far removed from their everyday life-world, a sense of alienation and powerlessness causes people to turn to available traditional, community and familial bonds within which they seek identity, direction and a sense of self-worth. Where these bonds are no longer viable or available the response will be anomie, alienation and often violent rage. In terms of Habermas' analysis of advanced capitalism, the challenge of religious diversity may be understood in terms of the reaction of the (socio-cultural) Life-World to its colonization by the (economic-political-technological) system. In such circumstances, there is a clear moral imperative to recognize and sustain such anti-systemic life-worlds. The alternative is to deliver humanity up to a global system of power premised ultimately upon nothing more than the profit motive and technocratic ideologies of economic rationalism.²⁹²

It is precisely in the tensions between the technology that helps facilitate globalization and the various forms of resistance to centralization, that we Christians find ourselves bumping up against adherents of the world's major non-Christian faiths and a myriad of new religious movements. The world's religions are no longer geographically contained in the Middle East, India or Japan. Similarly, many new religious movements have followed the trajectories of modern business interests and become diaspora faiths too.

9.1. Pacific Paradigm

Another angle that might help bring some clarity comes from the thesis propounded back in 1990 by the Danish Lutheran missiologist and expert on new religions Johannes Aagaard. He drew attention to some developing trends in alternate spiritualities, which he believed represented the unfolding of a transnational spiritual framework or paradigm. It was Aagaard's thesis that civilizations have developed in conjunction with transport and communications systems, and accompanying them one invariably finds religious beliefs and movements flourishing. He cited examples from the ancient world such as the role of the river Nile in the emergence of Egyptian civilization; the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia; the Mediterranean Sea in Greco-Roman history; the Ganges River in the Indian sub-continent; the Yangtze River in China; the Danube and Rhine rivers in Europe and so forth. Aagaard then referred to the power and influence of the "Atlantic Paradigm" for the rise and spread of western capitalist culture in the modern era. It was Aagaard's view that the dominance of the Atlantic based civilization was starting to decline and that the centre of influence for our time is what he called the "Pacific Paradigm" in spirituality.

Aagaard described it this way:

The Pacific Ocean with Hawaii in the middle is the new centre of power in the world. A new republic of grand cities (a metropolitan) is coming into being, beyond all political control. From its Pacific base, this new culture is spreading all over the world. It can be characterised as a mixture of the light from the East and the enlightenment from the West. It comes into being as a fusion of the light of mysticism with the enlightenment of rationalism. The result of this fusion is not yet clear, but it seems to be a sort of "trans-syncretism", in which a strong holistic trend brushes aside classical eastern religions as well as classical Christian faith. In fact, however, this holism is monism, and it is much closer to its Hindu-Buddhist-Occult roots than to its Christian origins. A red thread in this new trans-religion is its emphasis on divinisation. Man has become his own divinity, or is able to become so. Human beings are all gods and goddesses in process.²⁹³

It must be noted at this juncture that the "holism" Aagaard refers to is not synonymous with the way I shall be using the expression "holistic approach" later on in this essay.



Now the notion of an emerging Pacific Paradigm impacting the rest of the globe has been partly paralleled in observations made by the popular futurologist writer John Naisbitt:

The West is importing Eastern spiritual traditions with an almost unquenchable enthusiasm. Yoga and meditation are mainstream fare. Chinese acupuncture and Japanese acupressure are available in many major European cities, and even skeptics swear by their healing powers. Reincarnation and Kundalini energy, and Right Livelihood pepper everyday conversations of many Americans and Europeans. Korean ginseng is sold out at the local healthfood store, and Chinese herbs are coming on strong. Millions of women who are interested in Goddess psychology might have a little Kwan Yin statue next to a Virgin Mary icon. The person doing Tai Chi in the park is either an 80-year-old Oriental or a 30-year-old Occidental. Far from this being a passing fad, the real aficionado has moved on to the next layer of Eastern wisdom and embraces it with great gusto: getting Jin Shin Jyutsu treatments, investigating a psychic surgeon in the Philippines, studying Korean Shamanic tradition, Vipassana and Metta meditation, and Taoist meditation, not to mention Qigong, the 4,000-year-old science of internal energy cultivation.²⁹⁴

Since Aagaard presented his thesis, the concept of a trans-Pacific Paradigm appears to have gained some credence. The Internet certainly allows for the rapid transmission and dissemination of ideas across the Pacific region. Apart from our electronic communications systems, Australian scholars, such as Garry Trompf, have drawn attention to significant trans-Pacific spiritual trends. For example, Trompf has highlighted the diversity and vigour of new religious movements and cargo cults throughout the southwestern Pacific region of Melanesia, which forms one quarter of the world's cultures.²⁹⁵ Again in another colloquium Trompf brought together several young scholars who delineated the contours of various trans-Pacific forms of millenarian and cargo cult concepts and trends.²⁹⁶

9.2. Osmotic Boundaries & Spiritual Cholesterol

One of the trace elements in Aagaard's Pacific Paradigm thesis was the coalescence of certain Eastern religious ideas with western ideas. As Aagaard typified this as transcending geographical boundaries, we could liken this phenomenon to the process known as osmosis where a membrane is permeable and substances can move through an apparent

boundary to mix. That would certainly be true of the centripetal impact of globalization, especially when one looks at the globalised consumer culture.²⁹⁷

However, osmosis between ideas is not the only discernible phenomenon in globalization. Earlier we referred to Bendle who discerned that over against the centralizing forces of globalization one also finds resistance movements. Resistance to the centralizing forces of globalization might be likened to the accumulation of cholesterol in the blood stream, which leads to the hardening of arteries. Such resistance may be wrapped up in ethnicity, nationalism or religion: the centrifugal inter-reactive responses to globalization.

Garry Trompf has composed this succinct snap-shot:

The State is the political paragon of the so-called Enlightenment. It is the invention of cerebral planners, of a rational ordering of society *in spite of* the messiness of cultural realities 'on the ground'. Ethnicity, why not say it, has paradoxically become the political epitome of post-modernity. Empires and states break up or weaken on account of it; fabricated colonial states face disintegration under its pressures. And ethnicity is not essentially rational; it is fundamentally a collective emotional urge of belongingness to planetary space in the face of an *over-organized*, or more correctly *appallingly managed* world. Ethnicity burgeons from the raw earth, not from cerebral artifice.²⁹⁸

Trompf points out that ethnicity is often linked to claims over territory where some common cultural, religious and linguistic elements have been the basis for a particular nation-state. He also highlights the importance of indigeneity:

What we call 'the indigenous' (or indigeneity) encapsulates ethnicity into a sharpened sense of the pristine, of the *ethnê* or 'first peoples' occupying a land before other peoples came. As ideational constructs, admittedly, the ethnic and the indigenous remain products of the modern achievement to render the world intelligible, yes, in the current jargon, to invent it for analytical (and then 'political') purposes, yet ethnicity and indigenesness 'so-called' nonetheless reflect social realities and associations that preceded 'modern politics', or constitute the rock from which statism has carved its monsters. The indigenous defines its claims over place more persuasively than the ethnic. It not only denotes a 'firstness' among peoples to a given *topos*, but more than often a relative smallness, implying that a vulnerable, survivalist group had reached its place in



[sacredtribes]

Sacred Tribes Journal

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the sun' before modern times through a slow and steady osmotic process.²⁹⁹

In the closing decade of the twentieth century we witnessed claims of ethnicity over blood and soil in places such as Bosnia, Chechnya, Croatia, Kashmir, Macedonia, Palestine, Slovakia, Slovenia and East Timor. Whilst we can readily see claims to ethnicity or indigeneity in these examples, other forms of resistance can be noted. Trompf remarks:

A whole plethora of neo-ontic forms, or neo-ethnicities, including ideologies of ethnicity, or new regional, neo-tribal and micronationalist pressures now utterly complicate this 'post-modern' foil against bureaucratization and the practical hegemony of the (usually armed) state. The 'new Congolese' of central Africa, Melanesian Bougainvillean independence forces and Indian hilltribe Nagar revolutionaries immediately come to mind. And what we may call 'the less attestably ethnic' (e.g. with urban enclaves and 'minorities' in New World contexts) or 'less attestably indigenous' (e.g. most politically vocal Amerindians and Australian Aboriginal activists), and the 'synthetico-' and 'post-Christian' factor (e.g. New Agers) make for further confusion.³⁰⁰

Now it is precisely in this global matrix that spiritual cholesterol or religious resistance can be readily detected. In some of the above examples given by Trompf we can detect the spiritual concerns and agendas of say Melanesian cargo cults, Amerindian and Australian Aboriginal beliefs. These forms of spiritual identities assert their voice in a cacophony of ethnic, indigenous and religious claims to blood, soil and place. These asserting voices clamour for attention on the global stage, resisting the socio-economic-political system of globalization, whilst often also using the technology of globalization (e.g. satellite TV and the Internet) to have their cause heard.

9.2.1. Rave Culture Resists Globalization

Resistance to globalization can be found in the "Dance Cultures" of the urban west. The Rave Party culture rallies around the acronym PLUR: Peace, Love, Unity and Respect. One might initially feel a spark between this and the peace/love slogans of the 1960s hippies. However the Rave Party culture should not be confused with the youth culture of some four decades earlier.

The Rave Party culture intriguingly enough is a global culture. It is distinguished from other urban dance cultures (e.g. Goth & Vampire) by its electronic music genres: "techno", "hardcore" and "psy-trance". Many (but not all) are users of the drug ecstasy. A lot of aficionados have spiritual-political concerns, and are involved in radical political activism and performance art. They identify with experiences of alternative consciousness, eco-activism, anti-globalization rallies and nonconformist behavior. So quite a considerable number of participants in the Rave Party culture dovetail their interests in an alternate consciousness in dance with resistance to the socio-economic-political system that fosters globalization. Many of those who participate in the rallies against globalization (e.g. Seattle, Melbourne, Genoa) are in the Rave Party culture.³⁰¹

The Rave Party culture has attracted youth who are concerned about the diminishing of the earth's natural resources, pollution, and so forth. A link is forged by these activists between eco-activism and eco-spirituality. Eco-spirituality is a synonym for various forms of neo-pagan spirituality. Thus one finds within this Dance culture individuals who are known as "techno-shamans".³⁰² The Rave Party culture represents a loose network of youth who share some common values and ideals that transcends national boundaries. Of course not all "ravers" are neo-pagan nor are all neo-pagans "ravers". There are also neo-pagan activists who are not sedentary and have become modern nomads who are regularly on the move.³⁰³ It should also be noted that in some quarters of neo-pagan culture one ironically finds esoteric knowledge and practice distributed like a commodity to a consumer culture.³⁰⁴

9.2.2. Fundamentalism vs Globalization

Another form of spiritual cholesterol or resistance is found in various forms of religious fundamentalism. The term fundamentalism, which originally designated a theologically conservative expression of US Protestant belief, has become a wider phenomenological term in the world's religions.³⁰⁵ In its original setting the word fundamentalism referred to a movement within Protestant churches that reasserted orthodox Christian doctrines in response to liberal theological reinterpretations.³⁰⁶ As a movement fundamentalism was also concerned with defending basic Christian belief over against secular non-Christian criticisms (e.g. skeptics, rationalists, evolution theories etc.).³⁰⁷ However as a Protestant movement fundamentalism progressively became anti-intellectual and pietist. Fundamentalists appeared to disengage from the wider society after the "Monkey Trial" of 1925 in Tennessee and the death of J. G. Machen in 1937. After the Second World War a new generation of Christian believers, initially known as neo-evangelicals,



[sacredtribes]

Sacred Tribes Journal

Volume 1 Number 1 (2008):5-220

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sought to re-engage society and rejected the anti-intellectual ethos of hard-line fundamentalists.³⁰⁸

The term fundamentalist however has broken out of its original usage. It has also been used to refer to traditionalist tendencies within Roman Catholic thought, particularly among Catholic groups that have rejected some or all aspects of Vatican II.³⁰⁹

Fundamentalism is now identified as a sociological and ideological phenomenon found in all of the world's major religions: Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish. In each of these faiths fundamentalism represents a reaction against modernity with a strong reassertion of orthodox beliefs. It reflects the encroachment of modern western secular values and the impulses of globalization on traditional societies in the Middle East and Asia.

In these traditional social settings cultural change is a complex matter. On the one hand, traditional societies cannot avoid participating in the global matrix of trade and technology. The need for modernization of some social structures, education, health services and industry are recognized and partly desired. On the other hand, the influx of these things inevitably encroaches on traditional values, beliefs and lifestyles. The degree to which the benefits of modernization find their way down to a grass roots level is often a point of contention within traditional societies. As the upper echelons of society appear to gain the most at the expense of lower classes, resentment is bred. If the elite stratum of society manages to receive tertiary education in western institutions and return home, their perspective is partly westernized. How they appear in the eyes of their own people may very well cause alarm, as traditional patterns of life are no longer embraced.

The west may be utterly misperceived by traditionalist people just as westerners misperceive traditionalists. A clash of cultures and ideologies can erupt and inevitably is expressed religiously, for the fabric of religion is interwoven into all aspects of life and thought in traditional societies. In the eyes of some traditionalists the problems inside society can be traced to western influences and the shift in lifestyle and values on the part of those who govern. It should thus come as no surprise that when little of the benefits of modernization are shared with the lower classes (as happens in countries like Algeria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia) that resentment ferments and translates into violence (as in the case of the World Trade Center attack of September 11, 2001).³¹⁰ These religious

forms of resistance to globalization and westernization are classified as species of fundamentalism.

Globalization is not an omnipotent process as is sometimes imagined by advocates of conspiracy theories who misinterpret current affairs and lack any depth perception of how history unfolds. The bewilderment on the part of westerners as to why Islamic fundamentalists, such as those associated with the Al-Queda and Taliban, would resist and violently react is but another indicator of the superficial impressions, misperceptions and ignorance that popularly abounds in the west over traditional societies. It is here that apologists ought to become acquainted with the twin phenomena of reciprocity and the logic of retribution in the world's religions.³¹¹

9.3. Modernity & Postmodernity

Another conceptual factor on the big canvas concerns what various culture watchers call the paradigm shift from "modernity" into "postmodernity". I cannot dwell at any length on this and so shall confine myself to some very general and cursory remarks.

Towards the end of the twentieth century perceived shifts in western thought came to be referred to as the transition from modernity to postmodernity. In 1994 John Drane remarked:

"When the people of 2020 look back to the 1980s and 1990s, I believe they will see that we have been in the middle of a paradigm shift as significant as those inaugurated in the past by Copernicus, Newton or Einstein."³¹²

The term modernity is a convenient label that designates the dominant framework or outlook that characterized the modern western mind. Modernity is typified by an emphasis on human reason and autonomy, with rational conceptions of reality and a reliance on technological solutions. The roots of modernity are invariably traced back to Renaissance humanism and the rational epistemology of Descartes. The coalescence of modernity is generally regarded as coinciding with the late eighteenth century European Enlightenment, morphing through the inevitable progress-evolutionary thought-forms of the nineteenth century, and culminating in the twentieth century edifices of capitalism, Marxism, scientific reductionism and humanist perspectives. An icon for modernity is the mechanistic assembly line where order, efficiency and predictability prevail. The epitome of modernity is its bias in favor of scientific and rationalist explanations of reality, of seeking certainty in knowledge, and the corresponding rejection of all supernatural or spiritual viewpoints.



There can be no denying that through the processes of globalization widespread cultural changes are being experienced in the western world. In the midst of these cultural changes some European and North American intellectuals have formed the opinion that the whole edifice of modernity has collapsed. It is maintained that we have moved from the era of modernity and entered postmodernity or the postmodern era. Some say that 1989, which was the year when East European Marxism caved in, demarcates the end of modernity and the genuine beginning of the postmodern era.³¹³

The justification for this is that there is an intellectual outlook called postmodernism that can be detected in the fine arts, literary studies, cultural studies, sociology, legal studies and philosophy. Here the names of Zygmunt Bauman, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard and Richard Rorty crop up.

The contours of the postmodernist outlook are commonly identified as embodying a critical hermeneutic of literature and knowledge. Postmodernists maintain a perspective grounded in the sociology of knowledge, so that social factors such as race, gender and culture have a formative role in the way we filter or interpret data. It is further posited that the narratives through which people groups interpret reality are laden with palpable bias. Grand worldviews that purport to explain the whole of life present what are called metanarratives or overarching stories. Such stories may give coherence to a given group, but they can also be used as social weapons to marginalize others from sharing in society: women, migrants, homosexuals, indigenous people, and so on.

Postmodernists thus espouse a hermeneutical suspicion towards metanarratives, and advocate the deconstruction of metanarratives to strip bare the cultural bias. This is precisely where one excavates through the "archaeology of knowledge" to determine when particular words acquired their socio-political meanings, and how they gave rise to a social grammar or construct.³¹⁴ In this endeavor the postmodernist detects a social construct in the very agenda of modernity to acquire objective knowledge and certainty.

It is often said that if modernity was characterized by reason, certainty in truth, technology and metanarratives, then postmodernity is characterized by intuition, uncertainty about ultimate truth, cultural relativity but with an interest in exploring spirituality. Quite a few evangelicals have taken

notice of these intellectual currents. Some Christians operating from a modified-modernity paradigm have sought to debunk postmodern thought, while others regard the postmodern shift as a great opportunity to share their faith.³¹⁵

Some critical discernment may be in order for evangelical apologists on the subject. It is quite true that there is a postmodern view maintained in some academic quarters. We can also affirm there are undeniable trends in the way people are suspicious of social, religious and political institutions. Many seem to be questioning the rationalized systems that order and regulate modern life in the workplace and so forth.³¹⁶ The bombastic popular philosophies of modernity seem to have run their course too. However as we saw in Part Two of this essay evangelicals need to exercise critical caution about reifying abstract concepts and ideas. There is certainly a viewpoint held in parts of the western intelligentsia that reflect postmodern views. However our apologetic book industry might also be projecting onto the outside world something that is of our own making.

Irving Hexham, for example, expresses much antipathy towards the evangelical enthusiasm for everything postmodern. He cites examples from academic disciplines where the subjectivism of postmodern thought is repudiated. He further argues in a footnote that much of the evangelical openness to postmodern ideas can be traced back to Cornelius Van Til, Rousas Rushdoony and Herman Dooyeweerd.³¹⁷ Hexham challenges the emerging evangelical consensus about the value of postmodern criticisms of modernity. He contrasts the mood of some western intellectuals with the growing dominance of Islamic communities on the European continent. Hexham notes the growth projections for Muslims in Europe and indicates that on present estimates the Islamic faith will be numerically large and may even comprise a majority figure by the mid-twenty-first century. He provides insights into colleagues of his who are adherents of other religions and notes that none of them fit the mould of postmodern relativism.³¹⁸ Now it may be that Hexham over states his own case in repudiating both postmodernism and the evangelical love-affair with it, but he does make a valid point that the evangelical projected portrait of what a postmodernist is supposed to look like does not quite match up with the people he knows in real life.

John Drane expresses a more moderate view. He distinguishes between the ideology called postmodernism, and what he calls post-modern (using a hyphen):

I prefer to think of our present circumstances in terms of post-modernity, with a hyphen, rather than speaking of postmodernity or



postmodernism as some kind of self-contained philosophical or ideological position. The way I am using it, the hyphen draws attention to the provisionality and continually evolving nature of the changes that are now taking place and affecting all our lives. Far from having some clearly articulated world view or cultural position, today's people - Christians included - actually seem to be faced with nothing but chaos and confusion as we journey toward new ways of being. The values and attitudes of modernity have certainly been rejected (which is why we are post-modern, living after the demise of much that modernity represented). We cannot, however, claim that modernity has been unequivocally replaced by some other world view. As a matter of fact, we still live happily with the products and personal trappings of modernity even though we are disposed to question or reject its underlying value system.³¹⁹

In Part Three of this essay I also noted in passing how over the past decade I have found quite a few new age seekers who oscillate between "truth is relative" and "I want proof". So, whilst not being dismissive of the evidence for a postmodern intelligentsia, it is not entirely clear whether we are reifying postmodernism onto street-life realities or if these views are indeed taking hold.

We might also need to relate the lessons of the 1960s to our own time. Back in the mid 1960s much attention was focused on the death-of-god theology propounded by Harvey Cox, Gabriel Vahanian, Paul van Buren, William Hamilton, Thomas Altizer and Richard Rubinstein.³²⁰ Meanwhile the British pop band The Beatles were engaged in their public pilgrimage to India. By the end of the 1960s the death-of-god theology had virtually vanished, whilst simultaneously millions of baby boomers followed the lead of The Beatles and imbibed on psychedelic drugs and eastern mysticism. By the end of the twentieth century the 1960s spiritual search had become a mainstream phenomenon, while the death-of-god theology remains a historical curiosity that is forgotten.

Perhaps in the same manner, we might need to pay closer attention to the do-it-yourself spiritual surge at the grass roots level, rather than concentrating so much of our efforts on the postmodern intelligentsia. Obviously evangelicals should not ignore postmodernism, and if it develops along new or broader trajectories then more critical engagement with it will be required.

One other factor to consider is the reappearance of the esoteric magus traditions (i.e. the tradition of the magician). It might be true to say that much of the twentieth century was dominated by early to mid-nineteenth century thinkers like Marx, Darwin and Freud. They have come and gone. Now the new surge of interest in spirituality owes a lot to later figures of the nineteenth century such as Madame Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner, Annie Besant, Charles Leadbeater, and Aleister Crowley. Magus-based spirituality has come into its own not because of French thinkers such as Lyotard and Derrida. Rather, it has run parallel to the rise of modernity since Renaissance times, and is currently flowering in human consciousness.³²¹

This then is the broad canvas on which we find ourselves confronted by the challenge of mission and apologetics.

REIMAGINING COUNTERCULT MINISTRY

Now the critical review I have undertaken of countercult apologetics in this essay is not unprecedented. Starting from different reference points, a new climate of opinion about evangelism and the cults has been expressed by John Drane, Irving Hexham, Karla Poewe, Gordon Lewis, Carl Mosser, Paul Owen, Everett Shropshire and John Morehead.³²² Each independently has acknowledged that doctrinal apologetics enables Christians to differentiate between orthodox belief and heterodoxy, and it functions as a retaining wall that keeps false doctrine at bay. The consensus seems to be that the adversarial stance primarily results in preaching to the choir, with very minimal outcomes in the evangelization and discipleship of cult devotees. However their proposals for change and improvement tend to go in different directions, which is one reason why these commentators cannot be regarded as being of one mind. It would be a mistake to construe the views of these scholars and writers as constituting a unified school of thought.

Of course Roman Catholic scholars, sociologists and phenomenologists, have also critically examined aspects of countercult apologetics. Space limitations preclude any critical interaction with those scholars at this time.³²³

10. Missiology Ignored?

The perspective I am espousing is that countercult ministry needs to undergo a paradigm shift. That shift is not about an alteration to the content of the gospel, but rather involves a change in both method and mindset. The shift is from a narrow focus on doctrinal refutations over to an integrated, inter-disciplinary approach that is grounded in cross-cultural missiology.



Unfortunately, missiology has generally been overlooked in countercult circles. At least five factors have contributed to this:

- (1). The "cultural snobbery" of the West.
- (2). Lack of training in missiology.
- (3). Lopsided theological education.
- (4). Hyper-specialization of academic disciplines.
- (5). The concentration of apologetics on boundary-maintenance.

By "cultural snobbery" I mean that for many centuries the West has been the center of Christian civilization. In past centuries mission took place "over there" in remote "heathen" lands.³²⁴ As the Christian west was not "heathen" the unchurched could be tackled through finely honed apologias and evangelistic stratagems. However the center has shifted from the West over to Africa, and increasingly the West is being regarded as mission field. Sadly, apologists have not yet seen fit to reframe their understanding of their homeland contexts as being spheres for mission.

Most apologists writing about cults do not appear to hold credentials in the discipline of missiology (let alone religious studies). Apologists have confined their efforts to doctrinal refutations, and it seems that very little time is devoted to reading literature from theological disciplines like missiology. There is little bibliographical evidence that apologists are either relying on or critically interacting with missiological literature.

With respect to the curriculum of theological education, the topic of cults does not often loom very large. Irving Hexham has lamented the fact that ordinands for ministry are poorly trained for the missiological realities of life in a religiously pluralistic parish.³²⁵ In general, course facilitators often lack the necessary credentials in religious studies and the opportunities for students to engage in any practical, field exercises where they can interact with devotees seems to be few and far between.

Fourthly, hyper-specialization has kept missiologists and apologists apart without any cross-pollination of ideas. Indeed I have long maintained that the challenge posed by new religions really requires interdisciplinary responses from Old and New Testament studies, church history, systematic and historical theology, pastoral theology, missiology and apologetics.³²⁶

Finally, as Melton has intimated, there has been an apparent drift away from concerted evangelism over to boundary maintenance:

"The counter-cult approach originated as an evangelism effort, but with that proving unfruitful, counter-cult spokespersons have now redefined their work as apologists and limited their public activity to boundary maintenance for the evangelical community."³²⁷

This apparent ignoring of missiology in countercult ministry is curious especially when one recalls that the cults have been validated as a legitimate mission field by The Lausanne Convention, the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations.³²⁸ The topic of the cults has also been noted several times as a problem on mission fields worldwide.³²⁹

Yet, despite these occasional junction points where missiology and the cults may meet, apologists have by and large not taken up the tools of missiology. It is probably safer to surmise that many apologists may genuinely see no distinction between their apologetic refutations and evangelism and mission. Apologetics does belong in the missionary's toolkit, but missionaries know full well that one cannot equate apologetics with mission.³³⁰

We need to return to the scriptures to refocus on both mission and apologetics. Let us recall, from Part One of this essay, the remarks of David Wilkinson:

Apologetics, like preaching, is an art to be developed rather than a science to be understood. In developing apologetics for our time, we need to rediscover its biblical roots. Often our western theological tradition has narrowed the practice of apologetics, making it largely irrelevant to contemporary mission. A broader biblical view allows us to reformulate apologetics as an essential part of Christian ministry and evangelism in the new millennium.³³¹

Here Wilkinson maintains that in our time apologetics has been marginalized from mission but intimates that this is not the case when we examine the bible. So we shall first look at some biblical points about the purpose of apologetics, and follow that with a sampling of biblical points about mission. In that process we should begin to see the relationship between the twin disciplines handsomely wedded together.

11. Purposes & Benefits of Apologetics



Apologetics has at least six important purposes, of which there are benefits to both the non-Christian and the Christian. Firstly it is intended to *persuade non-Christians* there are sound reasons for commitment to Christ. Here apologetics acts as a handmaid to the evangelistic proclamation. Here the apologist commends the goodness of Christian teaching to the non-Christian *after* they have had the content of the good news expounded. In this mode the apologist acts like a barrister summing up a case before a judge or jury. Of course the precise degree of technical argument will depend entirely on whether the audience is popular or scholarly. Secondly, it *clarifies Christian belief* by clearing up misunderstandings that the non-Christian has about the faith. With clarification achieved the Christian can continue to commend the faith to the non-Christian with the accent on taking up Jesus' invitation to become a follower. Thirdly, apologetics also functions as a means of *rebutting contrary claims* by underscoring their logical, philosophical, theological or moral deficiencies from the standpoint of God's revelation in Christ. This is sometimes called negative apologetics because it entails a refutation of non-Christian beliefs and worldviews.

Fourthly, apologetics can take on the positive function of speaking to a given culture in a pre-evangelistic manner by exploring the primary questions of the culture and progressively *building a case for Christianity*, offering the gospel as the solution to those questions. Fifthly, it is often needed to *commend and defend the ethical claims of Christianity*. Here the apologist commends the goodness of God's moral standards on grounds the non-Christian can comprehend without conveying the idea that Christianity is a system of religious laws. Sixthly, apologetics has the added purpose and benefit of *assisting a committed Christian to know why they believe what they believe*. Sometimes this takes place in the context of tackling unsound doctrine inside the church, much in the same way as the early Church fathers dealt with heresy. However this benefit can flow on from any of the above-mentioned components of apologetics. As the Christian learns how to defend and commend, their own faith grows in confidence.

Apologetics then is about defending and commending the faith in all circumstances where warranted, and it complements the task of the missionary-evangelist.

John Stott has neatly brought some of these matters into focus:

In evangelism we should neither try to force people to believe the gospel, nor remain silent as if we were indifferent to their response, nor rely exclusively on the dogmatic proclamation of biblical texts (vital as authoritative biblical exposition is), but rather, like the apostles, reason with people from both nature and Scripture, commending God's gospel to them by rational arguments. In social action, similarly, we should neither try to impose Christian standards by force on an unwilling public, nor remain silent and inactive before the contemporary landslide, nor rely exclusively on the dogmatic assertion of biblical values, but rather reason with people about the benefits of Christian morality, commending God's law to them by rational arguments. We therefore need doctrinal apologetic in evangelism (arguing the truth of the gospel) and ethical apologetic in social action (arguing the goodness of the moral law). Apologists of both kinds are wanted urgently in today's church and world.³³²

Beyond Stott's plea lies another oft-overlooked purpose that in scripture apologetics and mission dovetail as complementary activities. This does not mean that apologetics is identical with evangelism and mission, but it is inextricably bound up with them. Evangelism involves communicating the content of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Mission entails making disciples of the nations through the proclamation of the gospel, but also encapsulates all the kingdom commands Jesus gave. Apologetics complements them by supporting the proclamation with sound reasons, all of which is conducted in full reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

12. Ancient Near Eastern Matrix

Now with that focus on apologetics reiterated, let us delve into the scriptures and rediscover some biblical mission principles. Let us also take note how mission and apologetics join hands, but ensuring we do not confuse either task.

The ancient Near Eastern world was the environment in which the Old Testament was composed. That was a world of mythic, polytheistic cultures. The Babylonians, Canaanites, Egyptians, Hittites, Persians and Sumerians understood the cosmos through myths or sacred stories that explained their relationship with the gods and land.³³³ Their sacred stories expressed their experiences of nature and the cosmos. The natural world was directly tied into the cosmos, and so their experience of reality was at its core interrelated with cosmic beings and powers. In effect the whole cosmos was alive and pulsating with a spiritual or transcendent energy. The sea, land, mountains, rivers, sky, stars and planets were comprehended as mysterious and divine. How the world, humans and cosmos originated were all explained through mythic events involving



gods and goddesses. These stories narrated truths pictorially through images and symbols that were impregnated with sacred or spiritual meaning.

The Hebrew people came into being in the midst of this ancient cultural matrix that was overwhelmingly mythological in its outlook. Hebrew faith arose and developed in that world so they could not avoid interacting with these pagan mythological patterns of thought. Their faith to be sure was grounded in a revelation from the only true and living God. They differentiated between the polytheism of their neighbours and the God of all creation. All of the cosmos bore witness to God's glory and handiwork. History was not an endless cycle of repeated events, but rather tending towards a purpose. So the Old Testament offered a different prism through which the cosmos was to be understood.

Apologetic themes are intrinsic to the Old Testament. The vocabulary of apologetics is implicit in the Old Testament and the legal language of the New Testament is also evident. The Hebrew word *rib* is often used and translated as contend, strive, dispute, or conduct a legal suit.³³⁴ However the Old Testament does not often dwell on why we need to do apologetics, but rather it simply sets out its apologias for those with eyes to see.

13. How Apologetics Works in the Old Testament

The Old Testament's apologia is about Israel's God - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The styles or approaches used to declare and commend Israel's God include the creation, wisdom, personal encounters with God, prophecy, miracles, and history. Generally, apologetics is entwined with Old Testament theology. However as we shall see further on, there are also occasions where pagan myths or symbols are used as a contact point for God's messenger and message.

13.1. Creation

There are two ways in which the creation is used for apologetic purposes. One concerns the Genesis story about God creating the cosmos. The other refers to the creation of the natural world, in that its continuing existence attests to God's presence, glory and purpose. Let's consider these two approaches.

Hebraic theology of creation was unique to the ancient Near Eastern world. It was a theology of monotheism; there is only one God, whereas the ancient Near Eastern nations were polytheistic. God is personal and

supreme over the creation, and is not tied down by any natural energies or forces like wind or fire. The ancient mythologies assigned roles to various gods, such as the god of the sea, the god of the sun and moon and so on. God is presented as a moral deity who is not capricious in his dealings with the world. God's judgment is grounded in a moral justice. The creation is the sphere in which God acts purposefully. At times the ancient mythologies have a 'soap-opera' dimension to them as the gods and goddesses plot, scheme and outwit one another.

God acts in grace towards humanity and is concerned with the redemption of both humans and all creation. These sorts of purposes are absent in the ancient myths. Fifth the creation was an original blessing as a habitation fit for humans to relate with God and each other. This is a theology of the origins and purpose of all things. In the ancient myths the creation has some order but it does not necessarily correspond to a blessing for humans.

From these theological contrasts the Hebrew Scriptures present an apologia to the ancient world. The objects of the creation, such as stars, planets, rivers, mountains and forests are not deities, nor are they controlled by a variety of localized deities. Instead the scriptures argue for the objects being the handiwork of the one true God. The Genesis story also starts with the creation as part of a universal history that is narrated between chapters one to eleven. The events associated with the creation bear witness to God and act as a prelude to the unique mission of the people of Israel. So the creation has a divine purpose that intimately involves humanity.³³⁵

The second way the creation is employed for apologetics is its continuing existence attesting to God's presence, glory and purpose. The Psalms use poetic language about the creation for both praise and apologetics. The heavens declare God's handiwork (Ps. 8:3 & 19: 1-8) and the cosmos is alive with praise (Ps. 148), so it is foolish to deny God exists (Ps. 14:1. Cf. Ps. 10:1; Jer. 5:2). Both Proverbs and Jeremiah declare the creation to be a work of wisdom (Prov. 8:22ff; Jer. 51:15-16). By looking at the natural realm we can see God exists and is present everywhere.

13.2. Wisdom

The Old Testament's theology of the creation is the sphere in which wisdom occurs.³³⁶ The wisdom literature of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes set forth pithy, yet deep insights on everyday matters of life: rest, work, play, relationships, love, grief and faith. It is life and truth integrated in the Lord. Wisdom is not conceived as being mere knowledge or understanding but is a relational concept because it is connected with God. At a basic level wisdom may concentrate on the



conduct of life's practicalities. At its highest-level wisdom focuses us on a direct, personal relationship with God.

The book of Job is a theodicy, explaining why the all-loving, all-wise and all-powerful God permits evil and suffering. In Job wisdom is at work in the creation. This wisdom is fused with divine goodness, as is made plain in God's reply to Job (chapters 38-41).³³⁷ Even if suffering is perplexing to the finite mind, the creation's very existence points to a divine purpose behind it. This is what theologians refer to as natural theology or general revelation: God revealed in creation. What is revealed in general revelation is not salvific, but it does provide an all-important link in the chain for cross-cultural communication.³³⁸

Walter Kaiser has stated that "the greatest case ever made for the unity of all truth, so-called secular and sacred, is to be found in the book of Ecclesiastes."³³⁹ Ecclesiastes' apologetic is that life without God is futile. As God has set eternity in our hearts (3:11), we have a craving that cannot be satisfied through work, money, or sex. Life on its own, viewed from a naturalistic worldview, can never supply ultimate meaning. True wisdom sees all of life integrated in the awe of God (3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12; 12:13).³⁴⁰ Both the theology of the creation and the character of God are the twin planks on which Ecclesiastes builds its case. Walther Zimmerli observed that "wisdom thinks resolutely within the framework of a theology of creation."³⁴¹ Wisdom is built on reflections about the created world and the active role of the Creator in sustaining it. The revived interest in wisdom in post-modernity opens up vistas for a wisdom-based apologia that Ecclesiastes points to.

13.3. Personal Encounters

One of the striking features of the Old Testament is its story telling. Genesis is replete with family sagas (Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham & Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph). The national history of Israel is itself largely told through the lives of individual priests, judges and monarchs. Even the prophetic messages are meshed with the individual prophet's circumstances and ministry. Over and again we see in these stories how individuals and families have personal encounters with God. Often the modalities of these encounters are through visions and dreams (Num. 12:6; Gen. 20:3-6; 28:12-16; 37: 5-10; Judg. 7:13; Is. 6; Ezek. 1; Dan. 7). Sometimes the encounters are auditory (1 Sam. 3) or involve angels (Gen. 19; 21: 17). These are subjective and personal in nature and persuade those experiencing them that they are dealing with God. In the language of evangelicalism, these are their "testimonies", and that makes

them valuable as an apologetic for the personal reality of experiencing God.

13.4. Prophecy, Miracle & History

Both fulfilled prophecy and miracles constitute apologetic proofs in the Old Testament. Three examples of fulfilled prophecies that occurred before the advent of Christ include the prophecy about Eli's house (cf. 1 Sam. 3:11-18; 1 Ki. 2:27), Ahijah's prophecy about Jeroboam (1 Ki. 11:29-39; 12:15), and Jeremiah's prophecy of the seventy years of exile (Jer. 29:10; 2 Chron. 36:21). The effect of such was to demonstrate that God is in charge of the flow of history and to authenticate the prophet as God's true messenger (Deut. 18:15-22). Miraculous signs such as those associated with the Passover, Exodus and Elijah versus the prophets of Baal, demonstrated God's power and vindicated the messenger (e.g. Moses, Elijah).

The Hebraic scriptures also offer an interesting apologia for human history, quite distinct from Greco-Roman and Middle Eastern historiography. In those systems history was viewed primarily in cyclical terms, often linked to cosmic cycles with no apparent end in sight. Hebraic historiography posited a definite beginning and end, and so presented a linear view of time and events. The saving acts of God, such as the Exodus, were past events to commemorate. The sacrificial system of the law expresses the need for atonement, and this is connected with the forward thrust of history. Within linear history cycles of blessing and judgment are recurrent themes, such as the patterns of apostasy, judgment, repentance and deliverance in the period of the judges. The prophets envisaged both a future messiah and a renewed world so that the spiral of sin did not mean that history would grind on aimlessly. The apologetic construct here answers the question "where is history going?" History has its fulfilment in the coming messiah and the restoration of the Lost Paradise. Although the Old Testament times did not see these goals attained, their apologia pointed forward to the divine goal.³⁴²

14. Hebraic Mission Principles

We often see pagan religious practices condemned in the Old Testament as detestable, and the house of Israel was forbidden to embrace these practices. Through the ministries of Elijah and Elisha we see polemics against the worship of Baal. We also see in the period of Palestine's conquest, the wholesale destruction of Canaanite peoples. William La Sor remarks:

"There is a reason behind the command, which is best understood against the background of Canaanite culture and religion. In Yahweh's eyes, the Canaanites were exceedingly great sinners, who not only committed



abominations but also sought to entice Israel to join them in these 'religious' acts. The discovery of Ugaritic documents at Ras Shamra in Syria has opened up detailed information about Canaanite religious practices. Religious prostitution, child sacrifice, and other features of this religion led Albright in one lecture to describe it as perhaps the most depraved religion known to man í Yahweh did not order the Israelites to exterminate all gentiles - only the Canaanites. This policy was not to become permanent, but as for the immediate situation, when the Israelites were occupying the land God had promised their fathers." ³⁴³

Understandably it is almost a reflex response for Christians to associate pagans with the devil, evil and under God's wrath. However this is not a complete picture of God's dealings with pagans. What we can easily overlook is that God was interested in saving ancient pagans.

Certain basic principles are set down in the Old Testament that have a great bearing on God's mission to reach pagan people. Firstly, every human being is made in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and God has set eternity in the hearts of everyone, and that must include pagans (Eccl. 3:11). Secondly, God is not just the God of Israel but is declared to be the true God for all people (Is. 54:5; Jer. 32:27). God controls all nations (Dan. 2:36ff; 4:28-37 and even guides their migration (Am. 9:7). The scattering of the people into new nations from Babel was also part of God's mandate given previously to Noah's family to fill the earth (Gen. 9:6). Thirdly, God chose a pagan to be the founding father of Israel, through whom messiah would be born and *all nations* blessed (Gen. 12:3). God could have chosen any pagan tribe on the earth, and it so happened in God's economy that Abraham of Ur was the one. Fourthly, the law given to Moses put responsibilities on the Hebraic people to care for aliens, refugees, and strangers (Lev. 19:9, 33-34; Deut. 10:18; 14:21). This shows that God wanted his chosen people to take care of pagans.

Fifthly, there was to be a witness to the nations (Is. 42: 6) and even the Jerusalem Temple would serve that purpose (1 Ki. 8: 41-43). We see instances of pagans who had faith and repented: Melchizedek the King of Salem (Gen. 14:18), Rahab the prostitute (Josh. 2:2-13. Cf. Heb. 11:31; James 2:25), Ruth (1:16), and the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5). There will be global recognition of God from among all the nations and God will arbitrate between the nations (Is. 2: 1-4; 66: 18-23; Joel 2:28; Mic. 4:1-3; Zec. 2:11; 8:20-23; 14:16). God sometimes refers to other nations such as Egypt as 'my people' and declares he will heal them (Is. 19:19-25). God's good justice is for all nations (Is. 51:4-5).

These foundational points show that God intended to reach other nations through his messengers and especially through the chosen people. They serve as a fundamental backdrop to understanding both apologetics and mission.³⁴⁴

14.1. The Puzzle of Divination

Now in view of these mission principles we can appreciate the sorts of apologias we have discovered so far. The Old Testament takes a dim view of pagan theologies and practices because of their connection with idolatry. When we think of pagan activity divination usually comes to mind. The Old Testament contains prohibitions on certain forms of divination, which are associated with idolatry, magic, necromancy and sorcery (Lev. 19:26, 31; 20:27; Deut. 18: 9-14; 2 Ki. 17:17). Magic in Old Testament times was used to manipulate, influence or control future events, and God countermanded this because he alone guides the flow of history. Idolatry begins in our thoughts and entails supplanting God with anything else and making it our ultimate concern.

Divination is the craft of foretelling future events through the interpretation of trances, dreams, visions, signs or omens. Not all forms of divination were prohibited. Some were clearly permitted: casting lots, arrows, hydromancy (water), signs and dreams. The casting of lots was understood to be an expression of God's will (Prov. 16:33). Lots were used to divide up the tribal lands (Num. 26:55-56; 33:54; 34:13; 36:2; Josh. 15:1; 16:1; 17:1, 14, 17; 18:11; 19:1, 10, 17, 24, 32). The choice of which goat would be used for the Day of Atonement and for Azazel was selected by lots (Lev. 16:7-10). Lots were used to select individuals for tasks (1 Sam. 10:20; 1 Chron. 24:5, 7-19; 25:8, 26:13; Neh. 10:34. Cf. Luke 1:9 & Acts 1:26) and to identify a guilty party (Josh. 7:14; 1 Sam. 14:41; Jonah 1:7).

Elisha ordered Joash to shoot an arrow and to then strike the ground with other arrows to signify a future military outcome over Aram (2 Ki. 13:14-19). The use of arrows (belomancy) was very common in Mesopotamia and pre-Islamic Arabia. The use of a sign or action for confirming a decision is attested by Gideon's use of the fleece (Judg. 6:36-40) and selecting combatants based on the way men drank water (Judg. 7: 4-7). Jonathan likewise predetermined what course of action he would take based on the behaviour of a Philistine garrison (1 Sam. 14:8-9). In pagan Egypt Joseph had a cup of divination (Gen. 44:5, 15) and there is no specific condemnation of this practice. In other words God permitted some modalities for seeking guidance about future outcomes, while those that drew people into idolatry were prohibited.



15. *Apologia & Mission to the Pagans*

We have considered the pros and cons of divination but one point we should not overlook is the fact that God revealed things *through divination* to the pagan Laban (Gen. 30: 27). There are even more instances than this one where the Old Testament makes positive use of pagan symbols and myths as an apologetic springboard. At least five modes of common pagan ideas or practices are used in Hebraic apologetics.

15.1. *Dreams*

In the ancient Near East dreams were a primary form of pagan revelation. The interpretation of dreams was a form of divination. Handbooks on how to interpret dreams are attested from ancient Assyria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Ugarit.³⁴⁵ Within these pagan contexts we find instances where God elected to make a revelation to a pagan through dreams. God spoke directly to Abimelech king of Gerar in a dream (Gen. 20:3-7). In Egypt God gave a prophetic dream to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:25) and Joseph who interpreted the dream was elevated from being a prisoner to ruling in Pharaoh's court. Edwin Yamauchi has noted that the name Pharaoh called Joseph, Zaphenath-paaneah (Gen. 41:45) probably comes from an Egyptian phrase meaning 'the god speaks, he lives'.³⁴⁶ A similar case with revelatory, prophetic dreams is found in Babylon with Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream. In each case the divinely revealed message is believed and blessings occur for those pagans. Indeed Abimelech, Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar each in their own way acknowledged God's supremacy (Gen.20: 8ff; Gen. 41:38ff; Dan. 2:47; 4:34ff).

15.2. *Zodiac*

Astrology was widespread in the ancient world and God through Isaiah condemns it (47:13-15). Yet without endorsing astrology's tenets, God directs Job's attention to the zodiacal constellations (Hebrew word *mazzaroth* in Job 38:32). The references in Job to the zodiac are used to show God's supremacy in an apologia based on general revelation. A heavenly star is portended to come out of Jacob (Num. 24:15-17), which certainly refers to a person and is often understood to be a messianic passage. It may by way of a typology link up with the stellar sign at Christ's birth.³⁴⁷

Similarly Daniel is appointed chief of the magi astrologers (Dan. 2:48), which in today's parlance might be the equivalent of Josh McDowell being appointed the CEO of a new age festival. Daniel's experience

brings into acute focus the tension between not compromising on truth while at the same time acting on a God-given opportunity to share. Daniel is given authority over Nebuchadnezzar's court that includes astrologers, diviners and pagan priests. Here was a peculiarly strategic opportunity to bear witness without endorsing forbidden spiritual activities. Attempts by his opponents to prevent Daniel from openly practicing his faith leads to the episode of the lion's den and his vindication by God before the pagans. Presumably it was through his ministry and the subsequent testimony of those Jews who settled in Babylon that sowed the seeds for the Magi's search for Christ centuries later (Matt. 2).

15.3. Pagan Prophet & Pagan Servants

We know that the Old Testament has many denunciations of false prophets. It also shows that God chooses both believers and non-believers to be instruments of his will. Balak King of Moab hired Balaam to pronounce a curse on Israel. God intervened in a hilarious way by enabling a donkey to speak. Through this pagan prophet a messianic prophecy was made (Num. 24: 2, 15-19).³⁴⁸ In Israel's historical apologia we find that events involving pagans are discerned as having God's hand on them. This is to reinforce the point about God's supremacy or providence over the events of history. Cyrus was called 'my servant' (Is. 45:1), even though Cyrus himself was a pagan and evidently not one who turned in repentance and faith. Both Pharaoh in Egypt, at the time of Joseph, and Nebuchadnezzar were also God's instruments.

15.4. Nature Worship Reframed

The prophet Hosea spoke to a paganised Israel in the eighth century BC using some of the most explicit pagan imagery. The nation was riddled with temple prostitution, beliefs in fertility gods, spirits in trees, and adoration of the heavenly bodies of sun and moon. Although the creation was being used for idolatry, this did not make the creation evil. Instead God spoke through Hosea using these very images of pagan devotion to woo in love an errant people back to the covenant (4:16-19; 5:7; 6:3; 9:10). God even used tree imagery to reveal himself, 'I am like an evergreen cypress' (14:8, NRSV).³⁴⁹

15.5. Pagan Myths Reframed

The Old Testament takes up ancient pagan myths about monsters (e.g. sea serpents and dragons) and transforms them for apologetic purposes. In the Mesopotamian creation myth Marduk defeats the monster Tiamat, and in the Ugaritic myths Baal defeated Yam the god of sea and rivers. In Scripture there are various poetic passages where these kinds of myths are modified to proclaim God' supremacy.



God defeats the many-headed dragon in the water (Ps. 74:13), that is named Rahab (Job 26:12-13; Is. 51:9). Rahab's allies are also subdued (Job 9:13; Ps. 89:10). Even the pagan gods are afraid of a monster called Leviathan (Job 41:25), but God has subdued and defeated it (Is. 27:1). In Hebrew *Yam* is the sea that God guards and controls (Job 7:12; Is. 51:10; Hab. 3:8). With each of these primordial encounters, the Hebraic mind gave a fresh twist to what had been portrayed in these ancient Near Eastern myths. They used these pagan stories as raw material for showing in a picturesque and poetic way God's supremacy and power over all things. The Old Testament does not accept the pagan theologies behind these stories, but rather transforms the stories apologetically to point to the one true and living God. This is what C. S. Lewis did with the ancient Greek story of Psyche in his novel *Till We Have Faces*. It is also a bit like Sherlock Holmes investigating Jesus' resurrection, using a fictional character with a matter of fact.³⁵⁰

We need to reflect on these cases where God and his servants appropriate pagan ideas and practices. On one hand we know that God detested idolatry and pagan practices. On the other hand we know God wanted pagans to be saved. It is clear that God sought to make his ways known through his chosen people. Their distinctive culture bore witness to the nations. Yet at times God placed his servants in strategic situations inside pagan nations. God's servants used these opportunities for mission and apologetics; by participating inside the culture they presented their faith through pagan symbols in ways the pagans could grasp the message. Hans Helmut Esser aptly summed this up when discussing the development of the doctrine of creation in the Old Testament:

"At every stage we may see a witness to the God of Israel as Lord of creation and as Lord of the world. This shows the ability of Israel to take over every theory of life, and use it in declaring the creative power and world dominion of her God."³⁵¹

So in the Old Testament we find there was a divinely ordained charter for mission. We also find that the Hebraic theological stance about God was unique in the ancient Near Eastern matrix. Their theology and apologetic were interwoven, and at times their apologetics was shaped to speak directly inside the pagan worldview. These linkages between apologetics, mission and theology are also found in the New Testament.

16. The Fulfilment Theme

So how does the New Testament engage in apologetics? The physical context for engaging in apologetics encompassed many diverse settings. In the New Testament these included a street meeting (Acts 2: 22ff), a household (Acts 10: 24-43), a formal presentation in a synagogue (Acts 17:2-4), a gathering of philosophers (Acts 17: 19-32), a lecture hall (Acts 19:9-10), and a legal tribunal (Acts 26). J. K. S. Reid has remarked that "apologetic activity is built into the foundations of the apostolic witness."³⁵² So apologetics is entwined in the very proclamation activities of Jesus and the disciples.

The gospels not only narrate the teachings and events in Jesus' life and ministry but also demonstrate he is both messiah and saviour. Matthew's gospel, amongst other things, uses fulfilled prophecies to demonstrate that Jesus is the messiah (8:17; 12:17-21; 13:35; 21: 4-5). Luke pays particular attention to healing miracles as evidence of Jesus' authority and identity (5: 12ff; 7: 2-10; 8:41-56). Throughout John's gospel are various "signs" - such as the water into wine, the healing of the nobleman's son, the healing of the lame man, miraculous feeding, walking on water, healing of the blind man, raising of Lazarus, and Jesus' resurrection - which are given to encourage belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (John 20: 30-31). Each gospel climaxes with the resurrection of Jesus and the witnesses who physically encountered him.

Within the gospels one of the major recurring themes is that of fulfilment. The message to the house of Israel is that Jesus Christ has come not to destroy but to fulfill the Law (Matt. 5: 17). The post-resurrection narratives indicate that Jesus taught his disciples that the Christ fulfils the law, the prophets and the writings (Luke 24: 44-48). In the ears of Jews this was an apologetic challenge for them to grasp that what was foreshadowed in the Hebrew Scriptures about the messiah is now complete in Jesus Christ.

John's gospel narrates the mission of Jesus among the Samaritans (John 4). The Samaritans comprised a racial mix of the former northern tribes of Israel with the Assyrians and other non-Hebrew peoples. The Samaritans shared some things in common with the Jews, such as the Pentateuch (albeit the Samaritans had their own version) and acceptance of spiritual forebears such as Jacob. Most of us are very familiar with Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well, probably having heard innumerable homilies about how kindly Jesus treated a woman of ill repute. What is often by-passed in the homilies is the fact that this was an encounter between two cultures and two religions.

Jesus' courtesy to the woman extends even to her worldview. When they talk about religious matters, like the correct place for worship, Jesus is



not derogatory. He builds on what Samaritans and Jews have in common - things like Jacob's well, a place of worship, prophets sent by God and a promised messiah. In his reply that true believers will worship God in spirit and truth, he implies that the time is at hand when worship will no longer be the topic of geographical location. What is implicit here is that Jesus as God incarnate will be, after the resurrection, present everywhere. The need for Mt. Gerizim or the Jerusalem temple is over, because Christ fulfils the functions previously served by these geographical sacred sites. Later on the apostles would build on this foundation in their mission to Samaria (Acts 8: 5-25).

Peter's sermon at Pentecost presented reasons to believe in the resurrected Christ (Acts 2:29-36). Peter built up common ground with the audience on the basis of the prophets as a prelude to presenting Christ (2: 16-21). He appealed to their familiarity with the events of Jesus' life and argued that God's attestation of Jesus was to be seen through the miracles, his death and resurrection. Peter positively asserted how he and his fellow disciples were eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection. So Peter's apologia involved an appeal to scripture, to the public deeds of Jesus, and their own testimony as witnesses of the resurrection. Peter's message to the house of Israel reiterates that Jesus fulfils the messianic prophecies, the law and the writings (Acts 2: 22-38; Acts 3: 18, 22-24, 5: 30-32).

The same thread about fulfilment is also applied to the God-fearers, those Gentiles who attended synagogue and embraced the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures. There is the case of the Ethiopian official who is reading Isaiah on his journey home. When Philip encounters the official, he takes the prophecy as a point of common ground and shows that Christ has fulfilled what Isaiah predicted (Acts 8: 26-39). In a similar fashion Peter shows Cornelius the God-fearer that Jesus has fulfilled what the prophets had foretold (Acts 10:43).

In each of these cases everyone who accepted the gospel already had some background in the Hebrew Scriptures. The scriptures were the entry points for both Jesus and the apostles to show they had been fulfilled. The fulfilment theme recurs when the apostles minister with pagan Gentiles, but the emphasis switches from the scriptures to other points of common ground. The post-apostolic apologists then followed this same approach:

The procedure of the Apologists as they faced these two different fronts has a recognizable similarity. In answer to the Jews they

developed their own thought about Old Testament prophecy, to show that in Christianity what the Old Testament had presaged had been fulfilled, and Christian doctrine was accordingly the legitimate descendant and heir of Old Testament thinking. In the case of pagan philosophy, the attempt was made to show the compatibility of Christian belief with what was highest and best in the ethical and philosophical affirmations of the non-Christian world.³⁵³

17. Paul's Mission Principle

The apostle Paul offered reasons for faith when talking with the Jews, God-fearers and pagans. Paul affirmed that he was set for the defense (apologia) of the gospel (Phil. 1:7). In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul had to clear up some confusion these Christians had about the teaching of the resurrection. As he deals with their misconceptions he also cites the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection and directly links that testimony to the content of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-8). As with the four gospels and the narratives in Acts, Paul presented the evidence for Jesus' resurrection to demonstrate that the gospel is true.

The connection between apologetics and mission is best exemplified in Paul's ministry. He stated that his fundamental mission principle was to become all things to all people, a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles, for the sake of the gospel (1 Cor. 9: 20-23). As Paul was born a Jew, his phrase "become a Jew to the Jew" sounds quite odd. What Paul was indicating is that when he approached a Jewish audience to proclaim Christ he did so by talking with them from areas of common or shared belief. The Jews and God-fearers (i.e. Gentile converts to Judaism) accepted the Hebrew Scriptures as God's revealed word, and so Paul showed from the law and the prophets that Jesus was the fulfillment of them (Acts 13:15). He mixed within their culture and observed their customs and festivals (Acts 16: 2; 18:18; 21: 24-26). In any town where there was a synagogue he would participate every Sabbath (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10 & 17; 18:4) and he used the Scriptures to share the message about Jesus. So in Paul's mission to share the gospel of Christ with Jews, part of his strategy involved finding common ground and arguing a case (apologia) to show his message was true and not made up.

Paul also had a missionary's passion for the Gentiles, people who had no background in the Jewish culture and were generally ignorant of the Hebrew Scriptures. The greater proportion of his ministry was spent in reaching the pagan Gentile world. As these people did not gather in the synagogues, Paul did not expect them to hear him as a special speaker in the synagogue. Instead he went to where they gathered and looked for areas of common ground inside their culture and beliefs. He did not quote the bible to those who were biblically illiterate.



An instance of this is found in Lystra (Acts 14: 8-18) where Paul and Barnabas had been the instruments for a healing miracle. A number of the pagans there wanted to address them as gods (Zeus and Hermes) and offer sacrifices. It is interesting to note that these pagans were at least open to the idea of a god becoming a human being. Paul cautioned them against worshipping Barnabas and himself and started his apologia from the concept of creation and God's providential care for the world (vv. 15-17). Although there was some considerable hostility, Paul later returned there because Lystra was Timothy's hometown (Acts 16: 1). This controversial episode in Lystra foreshadowed a more extensive narrative about what subsequently unfolded in the Mediterranean world's capital city for philosophy and culture, Athens.

17.1. Areopagus & Apologetics

The clearest example of apologetics and mission is found in Paul's ministry at Athens (Acts 17: 16-34). Dean Flemming states that Luke the author of Acts presents this passage "as a model of missionary preaching to an educated pagan audience."³⁵⁴ In this narrative Paul tackled two different cultures: Jews (v. 17) and Greeks (v. 18). As we have already noted how Paul approached Jews in the synagogue, it may be presumed that he presented Christ as the fulfilment of the law and prophets. However the greater part of this narrative focuses on how Paul interacted with the Greeks, particularly the philosophers.

What we can glean from the passage is that Paul understood the culture, literature and beliefs of the Greeks. As a monotheist he was provoked by the Athenian idolatry to proclaim his faith. What is most noticeable is that this provocation did not lead Paul into a crusade of literally smashing the idols. He did not belittle those who listened to him nor did he provoke his listeners by asserting that their idols were demons. There is no evidence to show he walked around praying against the idols or the demons behind the idols. After conducting his "seeker-service" in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearers, Paul entered the public marketplace to talk.

Paul's initial foray in the marketplace was centred on proclaiming the resurrected Jesus (v. 18). This action aroused curiosity among those in the marketplace. Some regarded Paul as unsophisticated. This is reflected in their rhetorical question, "what would this idle babbler wish to say?" (v. 18). The Greek term translated, as "idle babbler" is *spermalogos*, which can mean "seed picker". This expression referred to one who

divined fortunes by looking at seeds and hence one who makes his living this way. Spermalogos also implied that one was an intellectual hillbilly: a vagrant who pretended to be intelligent but was merely the purveyor of scraps of ideas scooped up from others. In the context of Paul's encounter with them, the Greeks were being derogatory: here is a gossip, a chatterbox, and a pseudo-intellectual of no repute.³⁵⁵

Despite this uncomplimentary slur, Paul is invited by the philosophers to make a formal presentation (v. 19). At the Areopagus Paul was courteous and did not engage in the same sort of name-calling he was subjected to. He commended the Athenians for their earnest search and religiosity: "I observe that you are very religious in all respects" (v. 22), and used one of their cultural icons as a springboard for his speech - the altar to the unknown god (v. 23). This is an instance of looking for some common ground in the audience's culture. Paul announces with some irony, "what therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you". The irony here being that for all their cultural accomplishments, philosophical learning and religious zealotry, the altar inscribed to the unknown god suggested they were somewhat insecure about leaving any deity out of their devotions.

Paul then develops his speech on the basis of the theology of creation. He affirms the unity of humanity in its ancestry and the supremacy of God over the creation (vv. 24-28). He rejects the idea that God lives in a temple or needs personal attendants, which is in contrast with the religious activities that occurred at the nearby Parthenon. When Paul mentions that God does not need servants there is a parallel reference to this in Plato's *Euthyphro* and in Euripides' *Hercules Furens*. His allusion to groping for God is reflected in the epic of blind Cyclops groping in the dark (v.27). This indicates that Paul had taken the time to become acquainted with Greek culture and their literature.³⁵⁶

Paul then quotes directly from the Stoic philosophers (v.28):

- Epimenides: "in him we live and move and have our being".
- Aratus (*Phainomena* 1-5) or Cleanthes (*Hymn to Zeus* 4): "for we are also his offspring".

Bruce observes:

It is not suggested that even the Paul of Acts (let alone the Paul whom we know from his letters) envisaged God in terms of the Zeus of Stoic pantheism, but if men whom his hearers recognized as authorities had used language which could corroborate his argument, he would quote their words, giving them a biblical sense as he did so.³⁵⁷



Paul then spoke about the resurrection, righteousness and judgment, and called for repentance (v.30). This is consistent with his preaching in other settings, both Gentile and Jewish.

What we discover from this passage is that Paul had no fear about entering inside a pagan culture. He had prepared himself by first studying their culture, literature and beliefs. He found various cultural icons and beliefs that he could use as illustrations of the biblical truth he sought to present. Flemming notes "Paul's ministry in Athens is a model of cultural sensitivity and creativity when presenting biblical truth to non-Christians."³⁵⁸ Flemming amplifies his observations:

With great care and rhetorical skill, Paul establishes rapport with his audience, and then through a series of contact points, he builds conceptual bridges that they can cross. He risks bringing Christian monotheism into dialogue with Greek philosophy. In Athens, the Jewish Christian gospel is transposed into an Achaian key. The church must always understand the culture in which it ministers and draw upon that culture's internal resources if it hopes to herald the gospel in credible and convincing ways. This is especially crucial when that communication must span significant cultural barriers, as Paul's did. At the same time, Paul refuses to syncretize his message or to compromise its theological integrity. He engages Athenian culture with the aim of its transformation. He builds on his understanding of the world of his hearers in order to critique effectively the false values, beliefs, and practices that are embedded within it. There are 'non-negotiables' to Paul's message that confront the prevailing assumptions of its audience.³⁵⁹

Flemming brings this missiological word to the western church:

The church today can learn from Paul's practice that authentic contextualization of the gospel requires us sensitively and critically to engage a pluralistic world, while avoiding the path of easy accommodation to the dominant culture. Only then can people be genuinely transformed. Paul's ministry in Athens in Acts 17 offers contemporary Christians an example of a magnificent balance between an 'identificational' approach that proclaims the gospel in culturally relevant forms on the one hand and a 'transformational' approach that resists compromising the gospel's integrity in a pluralistic culture on the other. Whether called to become 'as a Jew to

the Jews' within a familiar culture or 'as a Greek to the Greeks' among cultures different than our own, it is the church's constant challenge to herald the good news - under the guidance of the Spirit - with that same passion for both contextual relevance and courageous fidelity to the transforming word of salvation.³⁶⁰

It is this mission model which needs to be embraced in ministry to cults, new religions and alternate spiritualities that occupy their own cultural spaces inside the west and around the entire earth.

17.2. Objections to the Areopagus

Despite the obvious blending of apologetics, evangelism and mission in the Areopagus speech, some Christians regard the entire episode as one of Paul's greatest failures. Many lay Christians tend to hold that Paul failed in Athens, and some scholars have also espoused this view. Lay Christians generally present two objections:

1. If Paul was a success in Athens then why do we never hear more about this church in the New Testament? The fact nothing more is said about Athens surely proves he was a failure.
2. Paul was not Christ-centred, and omits the cross altogether. His message was riddled with philosophy, which is just worldly wisdom. Basically he admits in 1 Corinthians 2:1-3 that he had to repent of his Athenian flirtation with philosophy.

Scholarly antipathy towards Paul's approach in Athens has been best expressed by the classicist and archaeologist Sir William Ramsay (1851-1939), and by New Testament scholar Merrill Tenney (1904-1985). Ramsay's contributions to Pauline and Lucan scholarship were important at the turn of the twentieth century and his work is still widely regarded in evangelical circles.³⁶¹ Ramsay stated:

It would appear that Paul was disappointed and perhaps disillusioned by his experience in Athens. He felt that he had gone at least as far as was right in the way of presenting his doctrine in a form suited to the current philosophy; and the result had been little more than naught. When he went on from Athens to Corinth, he no longer spoke in the philosophic style. In replying afterwards to the unfavorable comparison between his preaching and the more philosophical style of Apollos, he told the Corinthians that, when he came among them, he 'determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2); and nowhere throughout his writings is he so hard on the wise, the philosophers, and the dialecticians, as when he defends the way in which he had presented Christianity at Corinth.³⁶²



In a similar vein Tenney wrote:

Apparently the ministry in Athens was a disappointment to Paul. He created no great stir in the synagogue, and the pagan population dismissed him with ridicule. He was accustomed to being thrown out of town, but he was not used to being subjected to contemptuous indifference. Evidently it cut deeply into him, for he wrote to the Corinthians concerning his arrival among them after leaving Athens: 'I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling' (1 Cor. 2:3). Possibly this timorous attitude had physical causes, but it seems more likely that the unusual dismissal Athens gave him unnerved him and caused him to rethink his whole procedure in apologetics.³⁶³

Advocates of power evangelism, such as Peter Wagner and John Wimber, believe Paul failed in Athens because his speech was unaccompanied by visible demonstrations of God's miraculous power.³⁶⁴

17.3. Rebuttals to the Objections

These objections rest on some faulty thinking. The fact we never hear about Athens cannot be construed as proof that Paul was a failure. There are many places referred to in Acts where the apostles visited for which there is no corresponding epistle: Antioch, Berea, Derbe, Iconium, Lystra, Malta, Paphos, Rhodes and Troas. The fact that some places did receive an apostolic letter is not a litmus test for success either. Not one of the seven churches of Revelation exists today. Yet, for almost 2,000 years a church has existed in Athens.

Paul was invited by the philosophers to speak because he was already speaking about Jesus and the resurrection (17:18), and not because he was flirting with Greek philosophy. Paul was indeed Christ-centred because he shared about Jesus (vv. 18 & 31). Furthermore, the very notion of resurrection presupposes bodily death. Although the Areopagus speech does not report the cross of Christ Paul's references to the resurrection would have been utterly incoherent unless Jesus' death had first of all been proclaimed. We should also keep in perspective that Luke's report is only a summation of what was said and done.

Another problem concerns the "number-crunching" mentality of some Christians. This is where the number of altar call responses becomes the primary or sole yardstick of measuring an evangelist's "success". On the face of it the number of converts reported (Acts 17:34) would seem

unimpressive. However the very assumption that success is to be measured by number crunching is not biblical. If one were to apply this formula to Jesus, particularly at the moment of his arrest when all deserted him, then we would have to regard Jesus as an utter failure. Success in evangelism is not an exercise in spiritual arithmetic, but rather depends on the servant's faithful proclamation of the good news (cf. Phil. 1:15-18; 2 Tim. 4: 1-5). All conversions are brought about according to the will and work of the Holy Spirit.

The flip side of this coin is to consider the first named convert, Dionysius the Areopagite. Although Dionysius is never mentioned again in the New Testament, this does not mean his conversion was of no repute. As he was referred to as "the Areopagite" this means he was a philosopher and a member of the Areopagus council. Here then is a person of rank and renown in the city of Athens. The classical historian E. M. Blaiklock reported that, "round the Acropolis in modern Athens runs the street of Dionysius the Areopagite."³⁶⁵ This piece of Athenian geographical trivia serves to remind us that this eminent convert has not been forgotten in his hometown twenty centuries later.

J. Daryl Charles draws our attention to Dionysius' enduring impact:

We are informed by Eusebius that Dionysius the Areopagite, a member of the elite Areopagus Council, converted to Christ through Paul's preaching and then went on to become a bishop in the church. Eusebius writes that Dionysius ended up being martyred for his faith. One wonders that still one thousand years later in parts of the Near East a body of pseudepigraphic literature (Pseudo-Dionysius) was still being attributed to the Areopagite of Paul's day. One can only guess that this was an extraordinary individual. Perhaps a moral of the story is that one never knows what faithfulness to God will yield. To the natural eye, Paul's ministry in Athens may have seemed a 'failure'. Another perspective, however, reminds us that the church did grow in Athens and Greece in the fullness of time.³⁶⁶

As regards 1 Corinthians 2: 1-3 indicating a change of heart in Paul, Don Carson points out that this argument is both illogical and involves an incorrect interpretation of the texts. The logical fallacy (technically known as *cum hoc, propter hoc*) mistakes correlation for causation. Carson remarks:

An example of *cum hoc, propter hoc* that occurs frequently in evangelical preaching runs as follows: Paul in his Athenian address (Acts 17:22-31) erred in trying to approach his hearers philosophically rather than biblically, and his own acknowledgement



of his error turned up in 1 Corinthians, where he pointed out that at Corinth, the next stop after Athens, he resolved to know nothing while he was with them except Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2). This exegesis seriously misunderstands the address at the Areopagus and Luke's purpose in telling it; but it also connects pieces of information from two separate documents and without evidence affirms a causal connection: because Paul allegedly failed miserably in Athens, therefore he resolved to return to his earlier practice. In fact, there is a geographical and temporal correlation (Paul did travel from Athens to Corinth), but not a shred of evidence for causation.³⁶⁷

We must remember that Paul's letter to the Corinthians was written around 54 AD, and that Luke composed Acts probably after 64 AD. If Paul had been a miserable failure in Athens and that was what he meant in his letter, then this view raises more questions than it does answer. Luke's composition of the Athenian mission comes at least a full decade after Paul's letter. As Luke was Paul's traveling companion we may safely presume that he knew about both Paul's experiences in Corinth and the contents of the epistle. Luke nowhere stated in Acts that Paul's Athenian mission was a failure, but rather the episode is included as an illustration of how to be "all things to all people". So the interpretation that Acts 17 records a failure involves what is called *eisegesis* (reading into the text), rather than *exegesis* (reading out of the text its proper meaning).

Paul's remarks to the Corinthians need to be read in the context of the epistle. After commending the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:7), Paul tackles a series of problems dividing the congregation. Some were into guru devotion breaking into factions centred on a favourite apostle. Paul rebukes them for chasing human oratory and human wisdom. It is in the midst of theological anarchy that Paul reminds them that they need to be Christ-centred and he illustrates this with how he behaved when he was among them.

Scholars such as E. M. Blaiklock, F. F. Bruce, J. D. Charles, David Hesselgrave, Alister McGrath, John Warwick Montgomery and Ned Stonehouse all agree that Acts 17 is a handsome illustration of the mission model we should all be using today particularly with those who are unfamiliar with the bible.³⁶⁸

18. Biblical Foundations for Apologetics

Up to this point we have sought to document instances where apologetics is engaged in throughout the bible. We have noted how the creation, wisdom, personal encounters, prophecy, miracle and history have been used apologetically in both testaments. We have also noted how apologetic entry points have comprised seemingly pagan things such as dreams, nature worship and the zodiac. These illustrate how the biblical books include apologetics in discharging God's mission to redeem people. Now we must consider what biblical teachings directly impinge on the apologetic task.

Alister McGrath maintains that the foundation for apologetics is grounded in the theology of the creation and of redemption.³⁶⁹ Creation and redemption theologies lay down foundations that affect the whole discipline of apologetics. The first plank concerns the origins of the cosmos, which is that God is the creator whose work was a purposeful act of blessing. In its pristine state of order and beauty God declared the cosmos was good and the creation was complete (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20: 11). All the creation belongs to God (Ps. 89: 11). The apex of the creation was the making of human beings in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-2). With God's image in all of us, this is where humanity's solidarity is originally grounded (cf. Mal. 2:10) and it makes human life precious (Gen. 9:6). Creation theology tells us about the true nature of our origins and life's purpose and this is foundational to what the apologist seeks to communicate.

The second plank is that God preserves, sustains and continues to actively work in the creation. The cosmos is sustained by his powerful word (Heb. 1:3) and all things are held together (Col. 1:17). God causes all life to be (Ps. 104: 14) and even the ground is renewed by the Spirit (Ps. 104: 30). God is not just the originating cause or source of the creation (Acts 17: 24; Rev. 4:11) but God is also still at work (John 5: 17). We live and move and have our being in God (Acts 17: 28). God continues to be concerned about both animal and human life (Jon. 4:11) and he is not far from any of us (Acts 17:27). Also the entire cosmos is destined for renewal (Is. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:10-13, Rev. 21). Effective apologetics hinges on God's work in the world and creation theology shows us how intimately involved God is in his creation.

The third plank concerns the solidarity of the human race in Adam's fall (Gen. 3:6, Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1). The Scriptures disclose that the whole person, including the mind and thinking processes, are stained by the power of sin (Rom. 1:18-20; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4). Idolatry begins in the mind and finds expression in deeds, but idolatry is not only a problem for the non-Christian; Christians are also susceptible to idolatry (cf. 1 John 5:21). So apologists must guard against turning their own theories



and methods about apologetics into an idol. Everyone retains the image of God and everyone knows within there is a God (Rom. 1:19-21; 2: 12-15). The image of God within is fractured but has not been obliterated (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). Human beings still have the capacity to recognize God's communication to them (cf. Gen. 3: 9-19). The creation is the sphere in which humanity has fallen and it is the same sphere in which God works out redemption. Both creation and redemption theology show us the fundamental spiritual problem we have, and the apologist's role is to point non-Christians to this reality.

The fourth plank is that the Holy Spirit is at work in the creation, convicting humans of sin, removing spiritual blindness and effecting spiritual rebirth (John 3:3-8; 16:8-11; 1 Cor. 2:14-16). The Holy Spirit shows the non-Christian the gospel is true. He superintends the church's mission (cf. Acts 8:26, 29, 39; 10:19; 11:12; 13:1-4; 16:6; 20:28; 21:11) and even enables the apologist to speak (Matt. 10:19-20). The apologist is an instrument in the Holy Spirit's hands.³⁷⁰

The fifth plank is that the task of sharing and defending the faith has been entrusted to us (Matt. 28:18-20; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; Jude 3). Apologetics is based on an apostolic command (1 Pet. 3:15), and all Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit (cf. John 14:26; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). So apologetics comes under the will and work of the Holy Spirit.

The sixth plank is that God has provided evidence and proofs for all to see (Rom. 1:19-20). Jesus furnished evidence that he had the authority to forgive sin by healing the paralytic man (Mark 2:1-12). John's gospel climaxes with doubting Thomas' encounter with the risen Christ, after which it is stated that the signs recorded are there to encourage belief in Jesus (John 20:30-31). Jesus showed himself alive to his doubting disciples with many convincing proofs (Acts 1:3). Paul also presented proofs to his various audiences about Jesus (Acts 9:22; 13:16-41; 17:2-3, 22-3), and recited the list of witnesses to the resurrection (1 Cor. 15: 3-8). The Holy Spirit uses evidences and proofs as part of his work in convicting people about the gospel. Presenting a convincing case is part of the apologist's brief.

As agents of God's kingdom (2 Cor. 5:20), we act as representatives of it to the culture we inhabit. The apologist has the culturally sensitive task of commending and defending the faith in the hope that those who listen

may emigrate to the kingdom. Don Gutteridge offers this useful observation:

The word ambassador denotes a person who represents his government in a foreign land. He must be able to communicate clearly the wishes of his president to people whose culture and language are completely different from his own. Only the most informed and articulate person can serve as an ambassador. Christians are also ambassadors to a world whose values and standards differ drastically from biblical principles. Furthermore, the language spoken by those who live in the world is not the language of the church. Therefore, if we are to be effective ambassadors, we must communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in terms and language that the people of the world can understand.³⁷¹

AN APOLOGETIC IMPASSE

At this juncture, it ought to be evident that apologetics and mission complement each other, but neither are they synonymous. We are not using the word "mission" as a mere synonym for "apologetics". Apologists who have been engaged in countercult ministry have put so much energy into defending Christian doctrine and refuting heresy. This has been acknowledged throughout this essay as an important function. However the difficulty here is that this style of apologetic does not lend itself very easily to any concerted attempts at evangelism and discipleship of cult devotees. As was indicated in Part One of this essay, there is no denying that some individual adherents have found the heresy-rationalist model helpful in their spiritual transition from the cult over to Christian faith. So this apologetic approach to cults does work, but it tends to have its best effect on devotees who are already questioning their commitment to the cult.

Apologists continue to press their doctrinal refutations and teach and alert Christians generally about the errors of cults. In terms of effectiveness, I have been at pains to note that the apologetic model of doctrinal refutation is largely reinforcing to Christians why the cults are wrong. What seems to be missing is any concerted and properly coordinated mission work among the various cults that parallels what missionaries are doing in cultures overseas. In other words, something of an impasse has been reached in countercult ministry.

I believe that there are two factors in this equation. There is the missionary *modus operandi* of the apostle Paul that is acknowledged as being directly relevant to reaching cultists. Then there is the strong tug in the opposite direction: the countercult apologetic criterion that is often sourced from a Pauline letter. It is this apologia that ironically takes us



away from a missions-focus and confines us to defending Christology. I believe that the tensions between these two factors can be best illustrated with reference to *The Kingdom of the Cults*. Again, let it be noted that the emphasis here is about issues and not the apologist as a person.

19. Mission Principles Affirmed

In *The Kingdom of the Cults* we find a chapter entitled "Cult Evangelism - Mission Field on the Doorstep." Here Walter Martin invoked the missionary paradigm for countercult ministry. It was not a thorough exposition of missiological principles, by any stretch of the imagination. However it stands as a reminder for apologists that the proposition of adopting a missiological approach to the cults originated with the "father of countercult apologetics."³⁷²

There is one missiological principle that Martin advocated, but the full import of it seems to have been missed in countercult apologetics:

Before attempting to evangelize a cultist, the Christian should, whenever possible, find a common ground of understanding (preferably the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, or the Personality of God), and work from that point onward. Christian workers must, in effect, become all things to all men that we might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9: 22). The Christian cannot afford to have a superiority complex or reflect the idea that he is redeemed and the cultist is lost. Redemption of the soul is a priceless gift from god and should be coveted in all humility, not superiority, as just that - a gift - unearned and unmerited, and solely the result of Sovereign grace. The necessity of common ground cannot be overemphasized for any sane approach to the problem of cult evangelism. Unless some place of agreement, some starting point be mutually accepted by both parties, the discussion can only lead to argument, charges, counter-charges, rank bitterness and, in the end, the loss of opportunity for further witness.³⁷³

Martin highlighted then the importance of finding common ground with cult devotees, and based his position on Paul's mission principle. Although in the above passage Martin nominated the bible as the preferred commencement point, he did not exclude other possible entry points. Thus in *The New Age Cult* he stated:

Find a common ground from which you can approach the controversial issues - perhaps from his religious background, his

family, or certain goals or practices that you have in common with him. You might discuss abortion, Rotary, ecology or patriotism. Whatever helps establish an amicable relationship facilitates communication, particularly if it is in the realm of spiritual values.³⁷⁴

The art of finding common ground is not only Paul's way of undertaking mission, but it also undergirds the whole enterprise of cross-cultural or contextualized mission work today.³⁷⁵ Sadly, despite Martin's comments about common ground, few apologists appear to have taken the next step forward of embracing the mission paradigm.

20. The Jesus of the Cults

Perhaps the most familiar standpoint ever taken in *The Kingdom of the Cults* is the differentiation made between the Jesus of the bible and the "Jesuses" of the cults.³⁷⁶ Martin's great strength in his apologia was his Christological focus. He emphasized the need for clarity in understanding who the biblical Jesus is over against heretical misrepresentations. In this respect he followed the example of the early Church Fathers.

His primary point of departure was Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15):

After revealing the existence of a counterfeit Jesus, Holy Spirit and gospel, Paul completed the parallel by showing that there are also counterfeit 'apostles', and counterfeit 'disciples' (workers), who transform themselves in appearance and demeanor to appear as ministers of Christ, but in reality, Paul states, they are representatives of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:13). He further informs us that this is not to be considered fantastic, unbelievable and incredible, for Satan himself is often manifested as 'an angel of light'. So we are not surprised when his ministers emulate their master and disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15).³⁷⁷

Those of us who have been positively influenced by Walter Martin have followed his cue and been busy charting the counterfeit Jesus in the cults. We have succeeded in demarcating the heterodoxy of all manner of groups with regards to the person, nature and work of Jesus Christ. In Part One of this essay I indicated the importance and benefit to the church of that exercise. I would in no way wish to downplay the Christological issue.

There is however a fundamental weakness with Martin's explanation of the Corinthian passage. I believe the slant he gave to it has worked its



way deep into our psyche and has had some subtle ramifications for the way we conceive of our apologetic task.³⁷⁸

20.1. Paul's Opponents in Corinth

The first and foremost point is that the 2 Corinthians 11 passage concerns a controversy inside the congregation at Corinth. Teachers have visited Corinth and undermined Paul's apostolic credentials, and sought to impose certain teachings on the parishioners. Paul's response to this, which constitutes the entire epistle, does not entail a discussion about how to evangelize heretics. The passage does not offer any practical advice about mission or apologetics. So we must keep that perspective in focus. The 2 Corinthians 11 passage does not instruct us to draft up doctrinal comparisons about a counterfeit Jesus or counterfeit gospel. These words are used by Paul to differentiate his own teaching to the Corinthians from teaching he is quite properly disturbed by.

However we can take this analysis a bit further. Much ink has been spilt in commentaries and journal articles over the most likely identity of Paul's opponents. Some clarity on this matter has been brought to bear by Paul Barnett.³⁷⁹ Here in point form is a summary of Barnett's case:

- Barnett takes up C. K. Barrett's position about Paul's opponents, but amends it at certain key points.
- Barnett draws attention to Paul's visit to Jerusalem in the late forties (Acts 15: 4), Paul's subsequent visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21: 17-18), and the "Missionary Concordat" outlined by Paul in Galatians 2:7-10.
- The Missionary Concordat entails the recognition that Paul was entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter was entrusted with the gospel to the Jew. The same God works through both Peter and Paul. The three pillars of the church (James, Peter & John) validated Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the Gentiles, while the three pillars were missionaries to the Jews.
- Barnett remarks: "When all that is implied is made explicit it appears we have here two gospels, two apostolates, two clearly demarcated spheres of ministry."³⁸⁰
- Barnett's chronology of events is like this:
 - (a). Missionary Concordat (Gal. 2: 7-9).
 - (b). Paul's missionary journey (Acts 13-14).
 - (c). A counter mission of Jewish Christian Pharisees in Galatia.
 - (d). Delegates meet in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

- (e). Corinth is visited later on by Jewish Christians.
- Barnett points out that Paul's letter to the Romans comes close to the time he wrote 2 Corinthians, and that in Romans one finds "polemical echoes" (e.g. Rom. 16:17-20).
 - In Romans Paul addresses doctrinal questions that Judaizing Jews would raise about his articulation of the gospel.
 - When Paul visited Jerusalem (Acts 21) a complaint was raised about what he taught, especially over circumcision and various customs.
 - The Judaizing Jews from the Jerusalem Church visited Corinth and may very well have sought to impose Mosaic legal requirements on the Jewish Christians in the Corinthian congregation.
 - Paul's second letter to the Corinthians includes his teaching that the first covenant is now surpassed by the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6-11).
 - "The mission of the Judaizers in Corinth, then, was twofold. It was, first, to reinforce Jewish converts in a conservative and ongoing Judaism. Secondly, it was to Judaize Gentile Christians to the extent of having them observe the fourfold decree of James."³⁸¹
 - Barnett draws these conclusions: "Their intention was, apparently, to reinforce Christian Jews in a conservative Pharisaic Judaism and also to bring Gentile believers under the terms of James's decree. From their point of view they were not transgressing the Jerusalem decision that the Gentiles were not to be circumcised. But from Paul's viewpoint to demand the strict adherence to the decree of James would have meant bringing Gentiles into the Mosaic Covenant which was now, he argued, 'ended' in Christ (2 Cor. 3:13). Since his opponents apparently appealed to the decree of James Paul also appeals to the earlier Missionary Concordat of Galatians 2: 7-9 pointing out that in their very coming the newcomers are in breach of the decisions reached there (2 Cor. 10: 13-16) í What Paul is chiefly offended at in these men is their deliberate triumphalism (2 Cor. 2:14), their disguise at righteousness (2 Cor. 11:15) and their calculated practice of the pneumatic and the charismatic (2 Cor. 12: 6). It is their cold-blooded invasion of his sphere of ministry, marked by deceit and pretence, which has evoked from the apostle the strong and polemical language which is the mark of 2 Corinthians 10-13."³⁸²

If Barnett's case is correct, namely Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, we are then left with an intriguing problem in justifying our usage of the "other Jesus" found in 2 Corinthians. The



dispute Paul locks horns over is with fellow believers in Jesus who nonetheless feel Paul is watering down the Torah. Paul is not locking horns with heretics who have started a movement outside of Christianity, or from people who are promulgating a false doctrine about the two natures of Christ.

What we have done in countercult apologetics with the 2 Corinthians 11 passage is this: we have worked out the correct idea about being spot on who Jesus is, but done so from the wrong passage! The 2 Corinthians 11 passage is not a polemic against first-century cultists akin to today's Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses, which prescribes for us a doctrinal remedy for apologetic argument or evangelistic strategy towards them.

We have become oriented over the cults as if they are all movements departing from Christianity, and so we have sought to remedy this with doctrinal arguments. I have stated several times in this essay that I have no quarrel with defending orthodox doctrine over against heterodox doctrine. The difficulty with what we are doing is, first, we are using the grid of heresy for defining all cults, and second, we are using doctrinal refutations as the sole remedy. However, all cults do not originate from inside the Christian Church, nor do all cults claim that they are the true custodians of apostolic teaching. We are busy refuting doctrines in all the cults that we have classified as heresies, but our remedy does not translate into nor does it parallel Paul's missionary methods. Put another way, Paul rebukes Christians for going off the rails in his letters, while the gospels and Acts show us how both Jesus and Paul evangelized.³⁸³

BECOMING MISSIONARIES TO THE CULTS

On the road to considering or adopting a missiological approach to new religions, good intentions are not enough. There has to be sufficient conviction that a missiological approach is worthwhile coupled with the motivation to actually try it. What follows are some of the salient issues that flow into the way we think missiologically about cults.

22. New Religions as Cultures

In 1997 Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe propounded the thesis that new religions do indeed form miniature global cultures.³⁸⁴ Throughout the previous installments of this essay it has been intimated several times that we can legitimately reframe our understanding of cults and new religions to see them as distinct cultures. Each group has its own distinctive cultural markers that distinguish it from other social groups: cosmology, cuisine, customs, myths, language or vocabulary, cultural

forms of art, music, literature and so on. If we insist on only viewing these groups as heretical organizations then their cultural nuances will be overlooked or regarded as peripheral. Unfortunately, then the apologist's efforts at refuting heresy are often ignored by the audience it is intended to convince.

We might also reflect on the example of the Christians in Ephesus. Both the farewell address of Paul (Acts 20:26-32) and the epistle (Eph. 4:11-16) indicate a high concern for purity of teaching and detecting false messengers. The Ephesians clearly rooted out heresy and yet Christ rebuked them for their loss of love (Rev. 2:1-7), and in the march of time their lamp stand disappeared.³⁸⁵

Once again let us put ourselves in their shoes. How do we respond to skeptics and rationalists who deliver diatribes against our beliefs? When speakers or writers boldly declare there is no proof for God's existence, that miracles cannot occur, that the bible is riddled with errors and contradictions, that science is based on evidence but our beliefs rest on empty faith - we do not roll over and "play dead" in the face of such an argument. Instead, we rally together to reassure ourselves that our beliefs are in order and that the skeptic is in error. We feel our faith has not just merely been maligned but also hopelessly misunderstood. We respond to the skeptic's claims within our own circles, and sometimes even directly confront the critic in a debate setting. We are sure that the truth is in Jesus and the critic is deceived.

Perhaps it is in like manner that many devotees of the cults and new religions form the same sorts of impressions about us in the manner in which we approach them. Devotees believe they have found the truth and see us, as we are their critics, as misguided zealots or ignoramuses.

However if we are prepared to engage in some mental gymnastics and widen the framework or grid through which we look at new religions, then the proposition that they are distinct cultures might start to make more sense. We have at our disposal the example of missionaries throughout the history of the church, as well as our contemporaries, who know what it means to enter inside another culture, dwell with its people, and minister the gospel. Missionaries simply do not parachute into another culture and begin preaching to crowds without having had some prior preparation. That preparation necessarily entails learning the language, customs, cuisine and beliefs of the people or tribe they plan on sharing with. The missionary does not approach other cultures using the small grid of orthodoxy versus heterodoxy. It does not mean that the missionary abandons his or her commitment to the verities of the



Christian faith, nor disregards the vital role of distinguishing heretical ideas from biblical doctrines in discipleship.

Apologists, who find they are now in unfamiliar terrain, should reflect on scripture with reference to both culture and the transmission of the gospel. In Acts we discover that there was not a monochrome Christian culture but many different scattered cultures spiritually united in Christ. There was a Jewish Christian culture that started in Jerusalem and spread throughout the Jewish diaspora (Acts 2). There was a Samaritan Christian culture established through the ministry of Philip, Peter and John (Acts 8:4-25). A black African Christian culture also began through Philip's ministry (Acts 8:26-38). A Roman Christian culture started in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), and Paul was set apart for mission to the Gentiles (Acts 13:2), with Christian communities formed in Syria, Greece and Italy. Even though the Jewish Christians chose to remain inside their culture, observing the festivals, customs and dietary laws, the Gentiles were not obliged to observe them (Acts 15; Gal. 2:7-10). Each Christian culture developed under apostolic guidance without Jew or Gentile being regarded as superior to the other. Paul's epistles reflect on the Christ-event and chart for us the outcomes of following Christ while living in diverse cultural contexts.

We must also recognize that contextualization is not some twentieth century novelty. The New Testament contains four gospels, and each one was composed in a particular cultural setting for a particular audience. Each gospel reports the teachings, deeds and events of Jesus' ministry, but transmits that message on the wavelength of its original audience. Thus Matthew's gospel focuses much attention on fulfilled prophecy that would have meant a lot to a Jewish reader, while Luke's gospel amplifies details for Gentile readers who lived beyond Palestine. The scriptures present God's trans-cultural truth in culture specific contexts.

In like manner, we need to present the good news to devotees of new religions who inhabit their own cultures, and impart the call to repentance and discipleship in terms devotees will grasp. However we need to shape our ministry along missiological lines. Much countercult outreach has operated on the basis of what the missionary H. L. Richard calls in another context "extraction evangelism". Richard is a missionary in Southeast Asia, and has been a productive writer on the subject of Christian mission and discipleship with Hindus. Extraction evangelism involves pulling a person right out of his or her own culture. The convert not merely abandons his or her former beliefs but ends up rejecting the

very culture he or she was born in. Richard notes that in the context of mission to Hindus, extraction evangelism has been affirmed, attempted but left with very poor results:

"This extraction of a disciple of Christ from his society is entirely unnecessary, however. The biblical pattern of ministry is to enter another's culture and live there." ³⁸⁶

The great weakness with extraction evangelism is it creates culture shock in the devotee's life. The devotee has been steadily socialized into the new religion through significant personal relationships. The evangelist or apologist is asking the potential convert to abandon all that is familiar and secure. In the New Testament the twelve disciples did abandon their trades and homes and walked with Jesus as he discipled them. They followed Jesus and in the context of living with him asked questions and began to develop faith in him.

However, in trying to reach devotees in new religions the abandonment that is requested is generally not to a lifestyle of rigorous discipleship. Rather it most likely entails joining a congregation of total strangers who are urban, middle-class people with whom they have almost nothing in common. The real challenge is to endow devotees with the fullness of the gospel, showing how Jesus fulfills what they have been searching for. A devotee who becomes a disciple of Christ will surely undergo changes in belief and lifestyle, but where we tend to go astray is in ripping people out of their pre-existing social relationships. We need to go from a piecemeal approach to actively developing the formation of intentional Christian communities that work through a network of social relationships within a given group. That translates into establishing discipleship groups or cell groups built from within the culture of the new religious movement.

The process of deconverting from a new religion may go smoothly for some and for others be very traumatic. The *modus operandi* of extracting individuals out of new religions brings so much personal turbulence that we ought not to be surprised that so few devotees are ever reached this way.

What might help us improve in our efforts is if we appropriate into our toolkit the very tools that missionaries use to identify, understand and analyze cultures. ³⁸⁷ So we start by working out the contours of the culture of the group we are concerned to evangelize. We consider what their fundamental myths and cosmology comprises, how they regulate the patterns of life in connection with those beliefs, how they interpret the outside world, what transforming vision they have either for this



world or the life to come, and what relationship there is between their ideas and practices in the wider history of ideas. In the background we will note how and where this culture agrees and disagrees with scripture.

The purpose of that preparatory exercise is to then discover points of contact and the development of a holistic approach to the group. A holistic approach combines biblical theology, systematic theology, pastoral theology, missiology and apologetics. As part of that process we could fruitfully explore James Engel's scale on the dynamics of the spiritual decision process.³⁸⁸ Engel's model needs to be reworked a bit to suit the context of reaching new religious movements, but the overall structure is helpful in working out where devotees are situated in terms of their understanding of Christianity.

If we then interact with existing scholarship in the field, we might also find our minds sharpened by angles and insights we would not normally note when operating on the heresy-rationalist model. For example, some striking parallels can be drawn between the phenomenon of the Melanesian cargo cult and various cults in western society.³⁸⁹ We could examine the interpretative insights from phenomenology about cargo cultism and the logic of reciprocity and retribution. We could take those insights over into part of our analysis of the Latter-Day Saints and we might find some new vistas opening up apologetically. As was briefly discussed in Part Two of this essay, the Mormons have created a distinct culture that sacralised North America. The people who belong to that culture have their own mythic cosmology based on the metamorphosis of man into deity (an evolutionary myth), thrifty socio-economic habits, eccentric dietary restrictions (word of wisdom), and a sacred vocabulary that presages the delivery of sacred "cargo" in North America. They have their own distinctive understanding about how God requites in history and their unique millenarian role in it.³⁹⁰ Once we grasp the cargoistic features we just might begin to deepen our understanding of the Mormon culture and discover new apologetic challenges and contact points.

23. Fieldwork & Research

A missionary initiative towards new religious movements will first require some careful fieldwork to research the culture preparatory to actual efforts at evangelization. Research at a field level means going to the places where the group gathers. Here the objective is to not just make friends, but specifically to observe how the group functions as a social unit, how it is structured, what are their primary rites of observance and how do they relate to the passages of life (birth, puberty, marriage,

family, death etc). Also research must necessarily involve obtaining the group's literature and becoming familiar with those primary sources. Proper fieldwork will entail making field-notes at the time.

Research work must also involve time spent in the library, for the library is to the researcher what the laboratory is to the scientist. It is simply not good enough for us to confine ourselves to trawling around Internet sites, whether they are set up by a group or whether they be set up in opposition to a group. The Internet can be a marvellous source for locating databases, but critical discrimination is required because a lot of worthless material can be found on the worldwide web. Of course the same discriminating palate is needed when undertaking bibliographical research in a library, which is one reason why the best places to head for will be the university and seminary libraries, followed by the state or national library of one's region or country.

One cannot be so bold as to think that all you need to know about a given group can be confined to one book (whether it is by the group or written by an observer of the group) or some press clippings. I wonder whether we are absorbing the "instant" and "quick-fix" values that operate in different parts of western society. Are we in danger of reducing our evangelism down to mentioning a few scandals in the cults, with some proof texts and slogans added in for good measure?

We would scarcely think that all you need to know about Christianity is to be found in say J. I. Packer's *Knowing God*, John Stott's *Basic Christianity* or R. C. Sproul's *Basic Training* (helpful though they may be). Nor would we be overly impressed if a non-Christian said you only need to read Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not A Christian* or Bishop Spong's *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*. If we can recognize how ridiculous it is to condense Christianity down to data found in one book, then it would be equally ridiculous for us to think we can honestly do the same thing to the beliefs of non-Christians.

This is not the place for an excursion into the rudiments of research techniques but one can make a start with the introductory guides by William Badke and Cyril Barber.³⁹¹ From there one can branch into other disciplines like sociology and phenomenology to grasp how scholars in these disciplines undertake their research, and what sorts of things do they look for when examining a religious group. What questions do they pose, and how might their research improve our understanding of new religions so that our mission-apologia work has maximum effectiveness.³⁹² Undertaking this seemingly laborious work is not so as we can find some academic badge of acceptance among scholars, but rather we should be wholeheartedly committed in our



servanthood to honor Christ in all we say and do. The act of engaging in quality and careful research work is itself an act of devotion to God.

24. Tentmakers

The shift from theory to praxis is essential, and a few practitioners have been pioneering creative, integrated missiological approaches to certain new religions. This is where we need to look at how practitioners in the field are already developing ministry models, and then reflecting on whether there are transferable concepts and methods that could be applied in other contexts. Much more work is needed but here are some examples:

- Ann Harper of the Alliance Biblical Seminary in Quezon City, The Philippines, has begun the necessary spadework for creating a contextually sensitive outreach to adherents of the Iglesia Ni Cristo church.³⁹³
- The Salt Lake Theological Seminary in Utah has developed the 'Bridges' program for reaching Mormons (see John Morehead's review).³⁹⁴
- Warwick & Dianne Saxby in Katoomba, NSW, Australia run a ministry called "Musterion". They live as tentmaker missionaries among an alternate community of artists and neo-pagans. Their contextual mission work has involved them in developing creative entry points into the culture, which includes carved jewellery of biblical and Christian symbols that are conversation starters. Warwick has organized and participated in a major local art festival where various Christian exhibitors had the opportunity to interact with both neo-pagan artists as well as the general public about the gospel. They also participate in street markets for personal witness.
- Rev. John Smulo has developed a creative contextual apologetic witness with Satanists in both Australia and the USA, (see John's twin essays in *Sacred Tribes*) and is also working on ministry with neo-pagans.³⁹⁵
- Bill Stewart (Dean of Students, Ridley College, Melbourne) and artist Steven Hallam (both of whom are also volunteers with the Community of Hope ministry, see below) have collaborated with John Smulo in developing a contextual apologia for mother goddess devotees. Bill has also taken opportunities to speak at Pagans at the Pub gatherings.
- John & Olive Drane (Scotland) have had many opportunities to witness to prominent new age figures, speaking with Druid

groups, and been invited to share their faith with the Findhorn community. Olive Drane also operates an effective clown ministry. They have also been involved in training local churches in running outreach booth ministries for new age seekers.³⁹⁶

- Hugh Kemp (Bible College of New Zealand) is a returned missionary from Mongolia. He has just begun preparatory spadework towards the development of a contextual ministry model for reaching western devotees of Tibetan Buddhism.³⁹⁷
- Ross Clifford and myself have spent more than a decade engaged in contextual booth ministry in Sydney (known as The Community of Hope) with new age and neo-pagan seekers. In our book *Jesus and the Gods of the New Age*, we provide case studies on how to blend contextual mission principles and strategies with apologetics.³⁹⁸ Our colleagues Harold Taylor and Wim Kruithof co-ordinate the same Community of Hope booth ministry in Melbourne.

25. A Fresh Agenda

For quite some time our apologetic agenda has been concentrated in scrutinizing groups like Children of God, Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-Day Saints, New Age, and the Unification Church. I suggest that we need to be alert to the new trajectories and challenges that lie before us. Here I can only provide a small sample of some of the movements and issues we ought to be tackling:

25.1. Movements

- Siddha Yoga, which was transmitted to the West by the late Swami Muktananda Paramahansa (1908-1982), is lacking any substantial Christian response. I would go so far as to say that evangelical attention to Hare Krishna has been disproportionate to its actual impact, whereas Siddha Yoga has quietly and steadily taken root in western consciousness. Siddha Yoga has touched the lives of more than a quarter of a million people worldwide, which simply dwarfs the number of adherents to Hare Krishna. The international headquarters for Siddha Yoga in Ganeshpuri has since Gurumayi's accession become a vast complex to the point where aspirants who desire to visit are obliged to submit applications in advance. Gurumayi has established a massive archive of material related to Kashmir Shaivism, Bhagawan Nityananda and Muktananda. It has become the center of attention for Indian scholars. Several important scholarly studies of tantric texts have been published under the auspices of the State University of New York Press.³⁹⁹ Siddha Yoga is also explicated in smaller western-based groups established by Swami Rudrananda and Da Free John.⁴⁰⁰ Also



some human potential teachers such as Master Charles and Michael Rowlands are former devotees of Swami Muktananda.

- *A Course in Miracles* is loosely taking on the form of a new scripture for a new emerging religion, complete with its own patristic and matristic interpretative and devotional literature.⁴⁰¹
- Mother Goddess/neo-pagan spirituality is fast becoming the preferred option for many teenage females, as well as for adult women who find their feminine sensitivities and needs well nurtured in it. This spirituality touches on at least three poignant issues that the Church is hemorrhaging over: women, the body and the natural world.
- The diaspora of Tibetan Buddhist beliefs and practices into the west constitutes a fresh challenge, especially as the western version is nowhere near as stringent as it is expressed in Asian contexts.
- The diaspora of various African (more than 6,000 different movements) and Japanese new religious movements around the world.
- The development of do-it-yourself (DiY) spirituality that operates outside traditional religious institutions, with diverse interests such as the hermetic traditions, new age spirituality, neo-pagan and neo-Buddhist faiths.

25.2. Issues

- We should humbly admit that we all need to have fresh input and challenges, and we should look beyond the constraints of our apologetics networks to listen to biblical scholars, theologians, church historians, and missiologists. We need to commit ourselves unreservedly to reading much more widely than we do, but to also conscientiously network with mission agencies, parachurch organizations and professional theological bodies (e.g. Tyndale Fellowship, Evangelical Theological Society, Evangelical Philosophical Society, Operation Mobilization, Wycliffe Bible Translators etc). We should begin exploring ways in which missionaries, who return home on furlough or who formally retire, could be made welcome in our circles. It is probably safe to say that retired missionaries are easily bored by the trivialities that preoccupy so many of us in our western churches. Retired missionaries may be looking for opportunities to be useful in their homeland and maybe our ministries could offer them a place to work. Here is a rich untapped vein of talent

that could be brought to bear in sharpening up our own ministries, models, methods etc.

- We also need to encourage theological seminaries and bible colleges to draw on our resources as well as providing regular internships for theological students to be mentored in our ministries. We could also consider how internships might be possible for the staff of para-church ministries and mission bodies, as well as catering for lay internships with local parish churches.
- As new religious movements are a global phenomenon, we need to widen our parameters and desist from being parochial. Christianity is a worldwide faith and we really should stop thinking of our own homelands as the center of the universe. We ought to be willing to help one another across the world; particularly as new religions have sprung up on all inhabited continents with a global diaspora to boot. For too long we in the west have treated our fellow believers in Africa and Asia with an overbearing degree of paternalism. We need African apologists who can help us better understand the diaspora of African new religious movements to the west. The same is true for our Korean, Japanese and Melanesian brethren.
- It follows on from the above point that we need to forego our cultural colorblindness and geographical ignorance. Surely the attack on the World Trade Center ought to be a sufficient "wake-up" call for American Christians to realize that religious movements from seemingly far-away places can no longer be ignored as trivial or irrelevant.
- It would also make a lot of sense if evangelical apologists could undertake collaborative research projects on a regional and global basis. One of the great difficulties is that where the Lone Ranger syndrome prevails, we end up with quite a few well-intentioned individuals or ministries "re-inventing the wheel". For example, we do not need yet another doctrinal analysis of the Watchtower's teachings that simply duplicates information one can already glean from other texts currently in print. It would make far more sense to pool our collective knowledge and put the effort into producing worthwhile resources (written, video, Internet). Here we need far-sightedness also on the part of evangelical publishers to widen their vision from serving North America or Western Europe. We need to rid ourselves of cultural snobbery, and in the west we also need some humility to realize that we must learn from Christians outside our cultures. No one apologist can master all the new religions alone, and we really need major publishers to support collaborative writing projects that include contributors from around the world.



CONCLUSION

We have reached the juncture where the pot has been sufficiently stirred, and readers need to digest and reflect on the information and arguments made. Let me remind readers that this analysis was very broad and generalized, and was not designed to be dismissive of what everyone has done in ministry with cults. The analysis was not about rejecting apologetics at all, nor was it designed to be a polemic against certain individuals or ministries. The focus was on identifying limitations and weaknesses, so that we could strengthen and improve what we do. The discussion of existing methods also provided the opportunity to look at another model. The model, which is admittedly skeletal in details here, is one that is meant to be integrated or holistic. That means it is not a model operating with just one tool, namely apologetics. Instead, the proposed model is concerned with the application of several tools that complement one another. So it not a case of polarization: either mission or apologetics, but rather both mission and apologetics. The appeal here has been to simply apply what cross-cultural missionaries have been doing for centuries, and use that as a stronger and more effective form of evangelism and discipleship with people in new religions.

I teach the subject of cults and apologetics. I am also actively engaged as a practitioner in the field as a missionary in my homeland with people who belong to other faiths. I have found myself forced to reassess methods and models while serving on the evangelistic and apologetic coalface. My experiences in the field forced me back to the scriptures with unanswered questions. Upon revisiting scripture and in exploring the history of Christian missions, I found that it was possible to take another tack from simply trying to debunk beliefs. I found that by reframing my understanding as well as adopting a missionary stance, that apologetics had its place but was by no means the only tool to use.

I do not pretend to have all the answers. However as I indicated at the beginning of Part One of this essay, my position is amenable to modification and expansion in the light of any relevant data. For those who have not yet tried cross-cultural mission in ministry with cults, new religions and alternate spiritualities please read on and reflect and then go out into the marketplace as the apostles did and see what happens. If after being in the field for a time you find your approach is better than mine, I would be delighted to hear of it. Constructive reflections on method from other missionaries who evangelize in street-life realities are treasures one looks for.

¹ The words cult and new religious movement will be used interchangeably in this paper, but it is noted that there are on-going debates between Christian apologists over the use of these terms, and this is mirrored a bit (albeit for different reasons) among sociologists and phenomenologists. For just a sample of views see Rodney Stark & William Sims Bainbridge, 'Of Churches, Sects, and Cults: Preliminary Concepts for a Theory of Religious Movements,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 18/2 1979, 117-133. Karin Kvideland, 'New Religions and Old Definitions,' *Temenos*, 16 1980, 62-67. Anson D. Shupe, *Six Perspectives on New Religions: A Case Study Approach*, Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981. Ronald M. Enroth & J. Gordon Melton, *Why Cults Succeed Where The Church Fails*, Elgin IL: Brethren Press, 1985, 1-19. N. A. D. Scotland, 'Towards an analysis of cult,' *Themelios*, 13/1 October-November 1987, 21-25. J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America*, Rev. Ed. New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1992, 3-25. Alan W. Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995, 7-17. John A. Saliba, *Perspectives on New Religious Movements*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995, 1-11. Irving Hexham & Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1997, 27-37. Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998, 13-40. George D. Chryssides, *Exploring the New Religions*, London & New York Cassell, 1999, 1-32.

² See David Fetcho, 'Disclosing the Unknown God: Evangelism to the New Religions,' *Update: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements*, 6/4 December 1982, 10.

³ The expression 'satanic adversaries' comes from Dave Breese, *Know the Marks of Cults*, Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1975, 127 & 128.

⁴ Ralph W. Neighbour, *The Seven Last Words of the Church; or, we never tried it that way before*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1973.

⁵ David Wilkinson, 'The Art of Apologetics in the Twenty-First Century,' *Anvil*, 19/1 2002, 5.

⁶ My thoughts here were stimulated in part by Eric J. Sharpe, 'Some Problems of Method in the Study of Religion,' *Religion*, 1/1 1971, 1-14.

⁷ No comprehensive history of the countercult movement exists to date but see J. Gordon Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America*, revised edition, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1992, 335-343. For a bibliographical survey of Christian countercult literature see



Anson D. Shupe, David G. Bromley & Donna L. Oliver, *The Anti-Cult Movement in America: A Bibliography and Historical Survey*, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1984.

⁸ Missiologists who have written about new religions oddly enough have not really integrated contextual mission tools into their writings on this subject. See David J. Hesselgrave (ed) *Dynamic Religious Movements: Case Studies of Rapidly Growing Religious Movements Around the World*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1978. Idem, 'New and Alternative Religious Movements - Some Perspectives of a Missiologist,' <electronic document> www.emnr.org/articles/new_movements.htm accessed February 1, 2001. Gordon R. Lewis, *Confronting the Cultist*, Nutley NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1966. Ruth Tucker, *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1989. J. Oswald Sanders, *Heresies Ancient and Modern*, London & Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1948, revised as *Cults and Isms*, London: Lakeland, 1969. Irving Hexham and Terry Muck are the only evangelical religious studies scholars to write on new religions.

⁹ See the estimate of Martin's importance in Tim Stafford, 'The Kingdom of the Cult Watchers,' *Christianity Today*, October 7, 1991, 18-22. A comprehensive and properly documented biography on Martin has yet to be composed. On Martin's life and career see Douglas Groothuis, 'Walter R. Martin,' in A. Scott Moreau (ed) *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 2000, 601. Also refer to the transcript 'Memorial Service For Dr. Walter Martin,' <electronic document> www.iclnet.org/pub/resourvces/text/cr/cr-nwsl/web/crn0010a.html accessed September 8, 2001. Robert L. Brown & Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, Vol. 3, Mesa AZ: Brownsworth Publishing, 1986, is a mixture of fact-finding and *ad hominem* argument by two Mormons who excoriate aspects of Martin's biography and credentials. Another hostile profile that partly draws on the Brown's material is M. James Penton, 'The Late Walter Martin's Sham Scholarship and False Orthodoxy,' <electronic document> <http://www.nano.no/~telemark/WalterMartin.html> accessed December 29, 1999. Cf. the defense of Martin by his daughter Jill Martin-Rische at www.waltermartin.org.

¹⁰ I had the privilege of meeting Walter Martin privately for some three and a half hours on June 28 1984 at Sydney airport (also in attendance was his assistant John Boyd). I found him to be a most affable person who did not hesitate to offer warm encouragement. He evidently generated tremendous loyalty and enthusiasm amongst those who

admired him and earned great displeasure or generated antipathy from amongst his many critics.

¹¹ See "The Thailand Report on New Religious Movements: Report of the Consultation on World Evangelization Mini-Consultation on Reaching Mystics and Cultists" <electronic document> www.gospelcom.net/lcwe/LOP/lop11.htm accessed December 5, 2001. Cf. The "New Religious Movements" edition of *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 15/3 July-September 1998. J. Gordon Melton, "Emerging Religious Movements in North America: Some Missiological Reflections," *Missiology*, 28/1 January 2000, 85-98.

¹² Two exceptions are the North American Board of Mission for the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Commission on Organizations. Both denominations have developed resources to further their homeland mission activities with respect to cults and new religions.

¹³ Philip Johnson, 'The Aquarian Age and Apologetics,' *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 34/2 (2000), 51-60.

¹⁴ Cf. A. H. Barrington, *Anti-Christian Cults*, Milwaukee: Young Churchman/London: Sampson Low Marston, 1898. Lewis B. Radford, *Ancient Heresies in Modern Dress*, Melbourne & London: George Robertson & Co, 1913. J. K. van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1938. Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1965. John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1999.

¹⁵ Norman L. Geisler, *False Gods of Our Time*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1985. Craig S. Hawkins, *Witchcraft: Exploring the World of Wicca*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1996. Francis J. Beckwith & Stephen E. Parrish, *See the Gods Fall*, Joplin MO: College Press, 1997. Cf. the essays by Paul Copan & William Lane Craig, J. P. Moreland, Stephen Parrish, and Francis Beckwith in Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser & Paul Owen (eds), *The New Mormon Challenge*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2002.

¹⁶ See Francis J. Beckwith, *Bahá'í*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany, 1985. Norman L. Geisler & William Watkins, *Perspectives: Understanding and Evaluating Today's World Views*, San Bernadino CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1984. Kerry D. McRoberts, *New Age or Old Lie?* Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989.

¹⁷ As exemplified in Walter R. Martin & Norman H. Klann, *The Christian Science Myth*, revised edition, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1955, 13-54. Idem, *Jehovah of the Watchtower*, revised edition, Grand



Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1956, 11-29. Walter R. Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1962, 15-34. Richard Abanes, *One Nation Under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church*, New York: Four Walls, Eight Windows, 2002.

¹⁸ Cf. F. E. Mayer, *Jehovah's Witnesses*, St Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1943 [Lutheran]. Eldon Winker, *The New Age is Lying to You*, St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1994 [Lutheran]. J. K. van Baalen, *The Gist of the Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1944 [Reformed]. Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1963 [Reformed]. James LeBar, *Cults, Sects, and the New Age*, Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1989 [Roman Catholic]. Mitch Pacwa, *Catholics and the New Age*, Ann Arbor MI: Servant Publications, 1992 [Roman Catholic].

¹⁹ On religious diversity in US history see Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. R. Laurence Moore, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986. Cf. the derivative historical sketch in Richard Kyle, *The Religious Fringe: A History of Alternative Religions in America*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

²⁰ Readers from the USA and Western Europe might find it fruitful to contrast their own religious cultural heritage with that of both New Zealand and Australia. On New Zealand see Robert S. Ellwood, *Islands of the Dawn: The Story of Alternative Spirituality in New Zealand*, Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1993. On Australia see Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993. Roger C. Thompson, *Religion in Australia: A History*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1994. Hilary M. Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996. For sociological treatments see Bruce Wilson, *Can God Survive in Australia?* Sydney: Albatross Books, 1983. Hans Mol, *The Faith of Australians*, Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985. Alan W. Black (ed) *Religion in Australia: Sociological Perspectives*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991. Peter Kaldor, John Bellamy, Ruth Powell, Merrilyn Correy & Keith Castle, *Winds of Change: The Experience of Church in a Changing Australia*, Sydney: ANZEA Publishers, 1994. On world religions in Australia see Purusottama Bilimoria, *Hinduism in Australia*, Melbourne: Spectrum, 1989. Paul Croucher, *Buddhism in Australia 1848-1988*,

Kensington: NSW University Press, 1989. Mary Lucille Jones, *An Australian Pilgrimage: Muslims in Australia from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, Melbourne: Law Printer, 1993. Hilary L. Rubenstein, *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History*, Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1991. On minority movements see Alan W. Black & Peter E. Glasner (Eds) *Practice and Belief: Studies in the Sociology of Australian Religion*, Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1983. Nevill Drury & Gregory Tillett, *Other Temples, Other Gods: The Occult in Australia*, Sydney: Methuen Australia, 1980. Graham Hassall, 'Outpost of a World Religion: The Bahá'í Faith in Australia 1920-47' *Journal of Religious History* 16 1991, 315-338. Lynne Hume, *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia*, Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1997. Ian Hunter, 'Some small religious groups in Australia: Mormons, Moonies, Hare Krishnas, Scientologists' *Compass Theology Review* 18 1984, 21-32. Marjorie B. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints: The Mormons in Australia*, Laie HI: The Institute for Polynesian Studies, 1991. Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia 1879-1939*, Kensington: NSW University Press, 1986. Dorothy Scott, *The Halfway House to Infidelity: A History of the Melbourne Unitarian Church, 1853-1973*, Melbourne: Unitarian Fellowship of Australia, 1980. F. B. Smith, 'Spiritualism in Victoria in the Nineteenth Century' *Journal of Religious History* 3 1964, 246-260. A brief historical sketch about the activities of Christian apologists in late nineteenth century Australia is found in Walter Phillips, 'The Defence of Christian Belief in Australia 1875-1914: The Responses to Evolution and Higher Criticism,' *Journal of Religious History*, 9/4 December 1977, 402-423. Also see Walter W. Phillips, *Defending 'A Christian Country'*, St Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 1981.

²¹ Readers can refer to the various reports posted at <http://watch.pair.com/> that comment on, *inter alia*, the tainted beliefs, methods, organizations and personal or professional relationships most countercult apologists are alleged to have with each other, with unbelieving scholars, and the implications of this in perverting the cause of Christ in the end-times. The reports present a conspiratorial interpretation of the activities of ministries or apologists profiled. This site offers a good object lesson for anyone wanting to grasp what can occur when one operates with unsound presuppositions and combines them with an obstinate mindset that ruminates about detecting and exposing conspiracies. Readers need to be discerning about the factual accuracy of the material, the evidential worth of the proofs mustered, the illogical inferences drawn and the fallacies in reasoning made, such as in the frequent use of guilt-by-association in the editorial commentaries. One tame but choice illustration is the citing of the subscribers' names to Rich Pollø's AR-Talk/AR-Forum listed on his website. Some individuals



have their names colored in crimson so as one can cross-reference the damning evidence against them documented elsewhere by the editor ó those in crimson include Eileen Barker, Craig Branch, Ron Enroth, Irving Hexham, Cathy Norman, Gordon Melton, John Stackhouse see ðSmoke, Mirrors and Disinformation í The Compromised Ties of the Apologetics Ministries. Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR) Part IIø <electronic document> http://watch.pair.com/cult-emnr2.html#_artalk accessed July 13, 2002. From the list of names singled out one can infer from the rest of the website that these individuals, whether knowingly or not, are supposed to be participants in a conspiratorial scheme of religious ecumenism, to blur the differences between biblical faith and the cults and world religions. Yet anyone who has simply read the posts on AR-Forum/AR-Talk will be aware that its stated purpose has nothing to do with any such scheme. One can peruse the lively vigorous debates and fundamental disagreements [dare I say squabbles?] that crop up on a range of topics. All one need observe are (a). The seemingly instantaneous responses from Anton Hein to any post made by the Scientologist Cathy Norman; (b). The heart-felt antipathy repeatedly expressed by some Christians about sociologists and phenomenologists like Eileen Barker, Douglas Cowan, Jeffrey Hadden, Massimo Introvigne, and J. Gordon Melton; and (c). Contrast the hue and cry of respondents on the topic of Harry Potter! The AR-Forum/AR-Talk is not a project devoted to the creation of a climate of opinion favorable to a one-world religion or one world government. If the site is so tainted with potential links to the Rockefellers and Pew Foundation, then one is dumbfounded to fathom why Rich Poll finds it necessary to repeatedly look for monetary support to pay the Internet bills for hosting AR-Forum/AR-Talk. Elsewhere on the watch.pair.com website one finds bald assertions such as ðIrving Hexham and Karla Poewe are not Christians, but anthropologistsö see ðSmoke, Mirrors and Disinformation í The Compromised Ties of the Apologetics Ministries. Evangelical Ministries to New Religions EMNR ~ Part IVø <electronic document> <http://watch.pair.com/cult-emnr4.html> accessed July 13, 2002. In such a bald assertion we find the editor presenting incorrect information. Irving Hexham is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary and does not hold a degree in anthropology, whereas Karla Poewe is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Calgary. What is far more serious is the assertion that they are not Christians despite all the published evidence to the contrary. It is sad but amusing to see that in the editorø view being a Christian and being an anthropologist are mutually exclusive. Following on from that bald assertion the editor poses this

question: "Does their book, *Understanding Cults and New Religions*, contribute to the spread of the Gospel worldwide?" Perhaps a candid and apt retort would be to pose back to the editor: "Does your web site, watch.pair.com, contribute to the spread of the Gospel worldwide?" The site is brimming with allegations of conspiracies inside Christianity, but it is difficult to see how the content of this website contributes in any way, shape or form to the direct proclamation of the Gospel. Any non-Christian logging in to the site will be led on a mind-boggling excursus into conspiracy theories *ad nauseam*, but not one single document furnishing a clear-cut explanation of the content of the gospel, Jesus' call to discipleship and so forth. Rather the general and uncanny impression created by watch.pair.com might be summed up in the old saying, "all are crazy save me and thee, and sometimes I have my doubts about thee." The editor of the watch.pair.com site may very well believe that this present footnote constitutes irrefutable proof of the sinister intent of this e-journal that it is another forum constructed to further the aims of those involved in a grand global conspiracy to dilute biblical truth from the church. Presumably by making these few remarks this will also be construed as a deliberate attempt to prevent or thwart people from finding the real truth about the state of Christianity as it is expounded at the watch.pair.com. site. The passion, effort and zeal that is poured into that website could surely be better apportioned into more constructive activities for the sake of Christ. Even though its reports are hopelessly skewed and riddled with scurrilous and specious assertions, there is no point trying to oppose this peculiar website, particularly as it would become a self-fulfilling prophecy in the minds of those who unquestioningly accept its contents as being true.

²² Robert H. Countess, *The Jehovah's Witness' New Testament: A Critical Analysis of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co, 1982.

²³ This is not to say though that this particular book is flawless. The point I am underscoring here is that collaborative efforts like these are definitely to be applauded.

²⁴ Francis J. Beckwith & Stephen E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis*, Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991. Abridgements of their arguments can be found in idem, "The Mormon God, Omniscience, and Eternal Progression," *Trinity Journal*, 12NS Fall 1991, 127-138. The same essay also appeared earlier in the *Bulletin of the Evangelical Philosophical Society*, 13 1990, 1-17. Cf. Beckwith, "Philosophical Problems with the Mormon Concept of God," *Christian Research Journal*, 14/4 Spring 1992, 24-29.



²⁵ Gordon R. Lewis & Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 3 Vols. Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1987-1994.

²⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. 1, 28-29.

²⁷ See Violet M. Cummings, *Noah's Ark: Fact or Fable?* San Diego CA: Creation-Science Research Center, 1972, 323.

²⁸ See John Warwick Montgomery, *Where is History Going?* Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1972. Idem, *How Do We Know There is a God?* Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1973. Idem (ed), *Christianity for the Tough-Minded*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1973. Idem, *The Law Above the Law*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975. Idem, *Faith Founded On Fact*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978. Idem (ed), *Evidence for Faith*, Dallas TX: Probe Ministries, 1991. Idem, *Christ Our Advocate*, Bonn Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft (Culture & Science Publishers), 2002.

²⁹ Montgomery was a good friend of Walter Martin, and for many years served as Executive Director of European Operations for the Christian Research Institute. Martin is named in the dedication to Montgomery's magnum opus in apologetics, *Tractatus Logico-Theologicus*, Bonn Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft (Culture & Science Publishers), 2002. In this work Montgomery does make passing remarks about some world religions and new religions. Montgomery was also critical of Sun Myung Moon, see his review of Jean-François Boyer, *L'empire Moon*, in *The Simon Greenleaf Law Review*, 6 1986-1987, 263-264. Countercult apologists who studied at the Simon Greenleaf School of Law include Francis Beckwith, Ross Clifford, Kerry McRoberts, Elliot Miller, and John Weldon. A controversy involving Montgomery and certain faculty and board members resulted in Montgomery severing connections with the School. Trinity International University now administers the Simon Greenleaf Law School. The apologetics component was transferred to Biola University. This is not the place, nor is it my purpose, to revisit that controversy. Both detractors and supporters of Montgomery evidently hold very firm views about it, and as personal relationship issues are a matter of intense complexity and privacy it is neither appropriate nor relevant to my analysis of apologetics and new religions. One can sift through the following disparate journalistic reports for different perspectives on it: Lynn Smith, "Founder to Leave Christian Law School, Ending Dispute," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1989, Part II, 1 & 6. Nicole Brodeur, "Beleaguered founder agrees to leave Christian law school," *The Orange County*

Register, January 12, 1989, B4. Randy Frame, "Problems Derail Law School Founder," *Christianity Today*, March 17, 1989, 48. Also see John Warwick Montgomery, "Simon Greenleaf: What Can Be Learned When A Christian Institution Falls from Greatness," *The Christian News*, October 5, 1992, 10-12.

³⁰ See David R. Liefeld, "Lutheran Orthodoxy and Evangelical Ecumenicity in the Writings of John Warwick Montgomery," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 50 1988, 103-126.

³¹ John Warwick Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible: Johann Valentin Andreae (1586-1654) Phoenix of the Theologians*, 2 Vols. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973. It has been reprinted by Kluwer Academic Publishers.

³² Such as Christopher McIntosh, *The Rosicrucians: The History, Mythology, and Rituals of an Esoteric Order*, 3rd ed. York Beach ME: Samuel Weiser, 1997, 30. For other views of Montgomery's work see Mircea Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, 2nd ed. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 15 & 190-191. Cf. these book reviews: William J. Bouwsma, *Journal of Modern History*, 48 1976, 160-161. J. R. Christianson, *Christian Scholar's Review*, 6/4 1977, 367-369. Charles D. Kay, *Christianity Today*, April 25, 1975, 33-34.

³³ James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, x.

³⁴ John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1973.

³⁵ Irving Hexham, "A Bibliographical Guide to Cults, Sects, and New Religious Movements (Part II)," *Update: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements*, 8/1 March 1984, 43.

³⁶ Cyril J. Barber, *The Minister's Library*, Vol. 2. Chicago: Moody Press, 1987, 472-473.

³⁷ J. K. van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults*, op. cit., went through several editions between 1938 and 1962. Cf. his booklet *The Gist of the Cults*, op. cit. and his popular handbook *Christianity versus the Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1958.

³⁸ Robert U. Finnerty, *Jehovah's Witnesses on Trial: The Testimony of the Early Church Fathers*, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co, 1993.

³⁹ Robert M. Bowman, *Understanding Jehovah's Witnesses: Why They Read the Bible the Way They Do*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1991. Cf. his



Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ and the Gospel of John, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1989, and *Why You Should Believe in the Trinity*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1989.

⁴⁰ Douglas Groothuis, *Revealing the New Age Jesus: Challenges to Orthodox Views of Christ*, Downers Grove IL/Leicester UK: InterVarsity Press, 1990.

⁴¹ James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting: 20 Ways the Cults Misread the Bible*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980. Sire's book could do with a new edition that takes account of subsequent errors manifested in the way new religions continue to misinterpret the Bible. His text would also be better if it included a preliminary chapter explaining evangelical hermeneutical principles. A more technical academic monograph on evangelical hermeneutics in the light of cultic hermeneutics is also a topic going begging at the present - one that could easily be undertaken as a doctoral dissertation.

⁴² James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 2nd ed. Downers Grove IL/Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

⁴³ William Cetnar, "An Inside View of the Watchtower Society," in Edmond C. Gruss (ed) *We Left Jehovah's Witnesses - A Non-Prophet Organization*, Nutley NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1979, 77. Ted Dencher, *Why I Left Jehovah's Witnesses*, revised edition, Fort Washington PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1985, 81. Mr. John Morehead, who is a co-editor of *Sacred Tribes*, was once a member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Mr. Morehead left that church and attests to the positive role Martin's book on Mormonism played in that process.

⁴⁴ See Joseph Tkach, *Transformed by Truth*, Sisters OR: Multnomah, 1997. Larry Nichols & George Mather, *Discovering the Plain Truth: How the Worldwide Church of God Encountered the Gospel of Grace*, Downers Grove IL: IVP, 1998. J. Michael Feazell, *The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

⁴⁵ Conversation with Aub Warren, then managing editor of the church's Australian periodical *Living Today*, May 1998 at Morling College, Sydney.

⁴⁶ Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism*, rev. ed. Santa Ana CA: Vision House, 1978, 265-295. Martin & Klann, *Jehovah of the Watchtower*, rev. ed. Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1981, 154-174.

Martin, *The New Age Cult*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1989, 97-108.

⁴⁷ Walter Martin (ed) *Walter Martin's Cults Reference Bible*, Santa Ana CA: Vision House, 1981.

⁴⁸ Roy Martin-Harris the executive producer of Vision House Films produced the series, which was made on 16 mm film. There were 6 films each lasting 50 minutes covering Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Mind Science Cults, Occult Explosion and the New Cults.

⁴⁹ See Walter R. Martin, "SENT/EAST Electronic Answering Search Technology," *The Christian Librarian*, 14/1 October 1970, 3-6. Idem, "The Gospel & Computer Technology," <electronic document> www.primenet.com/~jpott/martin.html accessed December 29, 1999. Cf. John Warwick Montgomery, "Automating Apologetics in Austria," *Christianity Today*, November 8, 1968, 57-58. Idem, *Computers, Cultural Change, and the Christ*, Wayne NJ: Christian Research Institute, 1969.

⁵⁰ See the critical discussion Douglas E. Cowan, "From Parchment to Pixels: the Christian Countercult on the Internet," <electronic document> www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/cowan.htm accessed May 16, 2001.

⁵¹ Norman L. Geisler & Ron Rhodes, *When Cultists Ask: A Popular Handbook on Cultic Misinterpretations*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1997. Ronald Enroth (ed) *Evangelising the Cults*, Milton Keynes UK: Word Publishing, 1991. The Zondervan series of booklets is edited by Alan Gomes, and almost every booklet has a "witnessing tips" section. *Christian Research Journal* is available from Christian Research Institute, PO Box 7000, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688-7000 USA. *The Watchman Expositor* is available from the Watchman Fellowship, PO Box 227, Loomis, CA 9560-0227 USA.

⁵² Wycliffe Bible Translators in Australia have devised for lay Christians a user-friendly orientation program called Operation Encounter. It is a study project that incorporates seminars, video-clips and field assignments that teaches participants about cultural behavior, beliefs and values. It is an excellent introduction for lay Christians about mission and culture. It is a model that could be easily adapted to commence a study on new religions. Refer to www.wycliffe.org.au/programs/encounter.html

⁵³ Now most of Lewis' books are published in Britain by Fontana, which belongs to the publishing empire owned by media magnate Rupert Murdoch.



⁵⁴ For some background see John Waterhouse, "Christian Publishing in Australia," in Dorothy Harris, Douglas Hynd & David Millikan (eds) *The Shape of Belief: Christianity in Australia Today*, Sydney: Lancer Books, 1982, 194-200.

⁵⁵ Ali Gripper, "Get a Life! (Please)," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 August, 1996, 11.

⁵⁶ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995. Cf. George Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in Alvin Plantinga & Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds) *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983, 219-264. John Warwick Montgomery, "The Emperor's Clothes," in C. E. B. Cranfield, David Kilgour & John Warwick Montgomery, *Christians in the Public Square: Law, Gospel & Public Policy*, Edmonton, Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology & Public Policy, 1996, 113-115.

⁵⁷ I do wonder though whether as zealous evangelists we have ever put ourselves in the moccasins of a devotee at one of these sorts of public events. Or put another way, how would we feel if a group of Moonies were picketing and handing out tracts about "True Parents" outside an evangelical church where a wedding service was being conducted; or if some Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses were busy handing out their tracts as a new evangelical church building was being formally opened and dedicated. If in such scenarios we evangelicals would feel outraged or incensed, then pause and consider how we probably appear in the eyes of devotees at a JW convention, a Mormon temple, or a Moonie mass-marriage gathering. There is an acute and unresolved tension here between being "prophetic" - as in speaking publicly against what is seen as heretical or idolatrous - and "missiologically sensitive" to the spiritual search and needs of devotees who are ignorant of the gospel. As ambassadors of God's kingdom in these particular activities are we wooing or repelling devotees from hearing the gospel?

⁵⁸ D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1984.

⁵⁹ First-hand accounts are given in Donald Grey Barnhouse, "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christian? A New Look at Seventh-day Adventism," *Eternity*, September 1956, 6-7 & 43-45. Douglas Hackleman, "Walter Martin Interview" *Adventist Currents*, 1/1 July 1983, <electronic document> <http://web2.airmail.net/billtod/martin.htm> accessed 30 January 2001. Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1960, 9-14. T. E. Unruh,

“The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955-1956,” *Adventist Heritage*, 4/2 (1977), 35-46. Cf. the reminiscences of Barnhouse’s widow in Margaret N. Barnhouse, *That Man Barnhouse*, Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1983, 223-225 & 251-254. Cf. Keld J. Reynolds, “The Church Under Stress, 1931-1960,” in Gary Land (ed) *Adventism in America*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 1986, 185-188. Also cf. Douglas Auchincloss, “Peace with the Adventists,” *Time*, December 31, 1956, 40-41. For a general evaluation of Barnhouse’s life and career see C. Allyn Russell, “Donald Grey Barnhouse: Fundamentalist Who Changed,” *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 59 1981, 33-57.

⁶⁰ Walter R. Martin, *The Rise of the Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1955, 15. This book went through several revisions in 1957, 1977, 1980 and again in 1983 when issued as *Martin Speaks Out on the Cults*, Ventura CA: Vision House, 1983. Martin deleted all remarks about Seventh-day Adventism from his book commencing with the 1957 edition.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 15 and also remarks on page 12.

⁶² Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, revised edition, Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1985, 410.

⁶³ Donald Barnhouse, *op. cit.*, esp. pp. 43-45. Martin, “The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism: Its Historical Development from Christian Roots,” *Eternity*, October 1956, 6-7 & 38-39. Idem, “The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism: What Seventh-day Adventists Really Believe,” *Eternity*, November 1956, 20-21 & 38-43. Idem, “The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism: Adventist Theology vs. Historic Orthodoxy,” *Eternity*, January 1957, 12-13 & 38-40. Idem, “Seventh-day Adventism Today,” *Our Hope*, 63/5, November 1956, 273-284. Idem, “Seventh-day Adventism,” in Harold Lindsell, et. al., *The Challenge of the Cults: A Christianity Today Symposium*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1961, 36-44. Also see the interview with Martin “Are Seventh-day Adventists Evangelical?” *Christian Life*, October 1956, 58-60. Martin expounded in more detail his rejection of those secondary heterodox doctrines he found problematic in Adventist theology, such as soul-sleep, investigative judgment, sabbath-keeping, the mark of the beast, etc in his monograph *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-219.

⁶⁴ *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine*, Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing, 1957. Oddly enough the book’s introduction only refers to an unnamed author who visited Adventist denominational headquarters to obtain “firsthand information” for a book that would analyze the differences in certain teachings between Adventists and other Protestants (p. 7).



⁶⁵ John Gerstner, *The Theology of the Major Sects*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1960, 19-28. A. A. Hoekema, *op. cit.*, 89-169 & 388-403. Gordon R. Lewis, *op. cit.*, 101-128. Harold Lindsell, "What of Seventh-day Adventism? Part 1," *Christianity Today*, March 31, 1958, 6-8. Idem, "What of Seventh-day Adventism? Part 2," *Christianity Today*, April 14, 1958, 13-15. Louis T. Talbot, *What's Wrong with Seventh-day Adventism?* Findlay OH: Dunham Publishing, 1956. Idem, "Why Seventh-day Adventism is Not Evangelical," *The King's Business*, April 1957, 23-30. Idem, "Why Seventh-day Adventism is Not Evangelical," *The King's Business*, May 1957, 23-30. Idem, "Why Seventh-day Adventism is Not Evangelical," *The King's Business*, June 1957, 23-30. J. K. van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults*, 4th revised edition, Grand Rapids MI: Wm Eerdmans, 1962, 228-256.

⁶⁶ Martin, "The Puzzle of Seventh-day Adventism," in *The Kingdom of the Cults*, *op. cit.*, 1965, 359-422. Much of this appendix comprised an abridgement of his book *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*. On the continuing problem of consensus among evangelicals see Samples, *op. cit.*, Wallace D. Slattery, *Are Seventh-day Adventists False Prophets? A Former Insider Speaks Out*, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1990, and Ruth Tucker, *op. cit.*, 93-116. Adventist authors whose works have been released by evangelical publishing houses include: Gerhard F. Hasel (Eerdmans & Baker), Sakae Kubo & Walter F. Specht (Zondervan), Gary Land (Eerdmans) and Edwin R. Thiele (Zondervan).

⁶⁷ M. L. Andreasen, *Letters to the Churches*, Brushton NY: Teach Services, 1996 [1959]. Cf. Geoffrey J. Paxton's account in *The Shaking of Adventism*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1978, 88-96. Malcolm Bull & Keith Lockhart, *Seeking A Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, 69, argue that Martin misjudged Adventism by uncritically accepting what was propounded in *Questions on Doctrine*.

⁶⁸ *Doctrinal Discussions*, Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing, n.d. This volume comprised various articles that first appeared in the Adventist periodical *The Ministry* between June 1960 and July 1961. There are no bibliographical citations to this volume or periodical articles in any edition of Martin's subsequently published work, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, *op. cit.*, 1965, revised editions released in 1968, 1977, 1985 & posthumously in 1997.

⁶⁹ See Edward E. Plowman, 'The Shaking Up of Adventism?' *Christianity Today*, February 8, 1980, 64-67. Lowell R. Tarling, *The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism: A Study of Separatist Groups Emerging from the Seventh-day Adventist Church (1844-1980)*, Bermagui Bay NSW: Galilee Publications, 1981. Gary Land (ed) *Adventism in America, op. cit.*, 215-230. Kenneth R. Samples, 'From Controversy to Crisis: An Updated Assessment of Seventh-day Adventism,' *Christian Research Journal*, 11/1 Summer 1988, 8-14. Bull & Lockhart, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ On Martin's willingness to reassess his own position see *The Kingdom of the Cults*, *op. cit.*, 1985, 410-411.

⁷¹ John L. Bracht, 'Mormonism: The Search For A Personal God,' *MA Thesis*, University of Sydney, 1988, 1. Sadly Bracht's thesis has been overlooked in North American evangelical circles. The same holds true for Bracht's scholarly essay 'The Americanization of Adam,' in G.W. Trompf (ed) *Cargo Cults and Millenarian Movements: Transoceanic Comparisons of New Religious Movements*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990, 97-141.

⁷² Bracht, *Mormonism*, *loc. cit.*

⁷³ *Ibid*, 8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 1-2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 3.

⁷⁷ With this latter question I suggest as a rough analogy the 2,000 members of the Evangelical Orthodox Church that entered into full communion in 1987 with the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. See Peter E. Gillquist, *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith*, Brentwood TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1989.

⁷⁸ FARMS is the acronym for the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies.

⁷⁹ Bracht, *Mormonism op. cit.*, 7-8.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 6-7.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁸² Of course it should be noted that three apologetic publications appeared in the interim that attempted to deal with Mormons in different ways from the staple diet of anti-Mormon argument: Francis J. Beckwith & Stephen E. Parrish, *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical*



Analysis, Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991. Mark J. Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, Milwaukee WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993. Craig L. Blomberg & Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997. Although these texts were written partly because of perceived defects in existing apologetic material, none of them were composed as primary critical appraisals of existing anti-Mormon apologetic literature. Space limitations preclude me venturing into the tsunami-like tempest over the Blomberg-Robinson dialogue.

⁸³ Carl Mosser & Paul Owen, 'Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?' *Trinity Journal*, 19NS 1998, 179-205.

⁸⁴ Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser & Paul Owen (eds) *The New Mormon Challenge*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2002.

⁸⁵ John Ankerberg & John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1999, 317.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 316-318.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 316.

⁸⁸ Irving Hexham & Karla Poewe, *New Religions as Global Cultures: Making the Human Sacred*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1997, 81.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 90.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 90-91.

⁹² *Ibid*, 94-95.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 95.

⁹⁴ See the "Review" section of *Sacred Tribes* 1/1.

⁹⁵ Cf. Steven C. Harper, 'Infallible Proofs, Both Human and Divine: The Persuasiveness of Mormonism for Early Converts,' *Religion and American Culture*, 10/1 Winter 2000, 99-118. On the American founding fathers' commitments to Deism see John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shaping of America*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany, 1976, 47-57.

⁹⁶ John L. Brooke, *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁹⁷ See Bracht, 'Americanization of Adam' *op. cit.*

⁹⁸ These expressions will be discussed in Part Four. Cf. H. L. Richard, *Following Jesus in the Hindu Context*, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1998, 104-105.

⁹⁹ On La Vey's atheism and plagiarism see John Smulo, '*Christ's Advocate: An Incarnational Apologetic to Satanism*,' B. Min (Hons) Thesis, Australian College of Theology, 2001. Smulo has been engaged in fruitful conversational witness with several Satanists in Australia and the USA, both in person and via the Internet, and has had a prominent Satanist attend his church to hear the Gospel preached. Smulo has provoked a lot of discussion among Satanists about the Gospel with several requesting copies of his thesis, and a few have privately contacted him about their personal struggles and even asking for prayer. He has had opportunities to answer many apologetic questions and objections that some Satanists have in their understanding of Christianity. Smulo has found that quite a few who call themselves Satanists were reared in churches or attended church-run schools and often left with unanswered questions. Their adolescent disenchantment with Christianity appears to dovetail with them encountering anti-intellectual attitudes among lay Christians, a dismissive avoidance by Christians of tough apologetic questions, and the sense that Christians deem intellectual inquiry to be unimportant. The extent to which Satanists have been challenged by Smulo's arguments is attested to by the fact that his thesis has been loaded up as a publicly available document on three Satanist web sites. Atheist Satanists are keenly aware of Christian literature that completely misrepresents their philosophy, which only reinforces to them their negative perceptions of Christians. However quite a few are willing to listen to Christians who can intelligently articulate their faith, answer apologetic and theological questions, and can challenge them to consider afresh the unique Gospel of Christ. For electronic versions of Smulo's thesis see www.pe1rdw.demon.nl/satan/js.html or <http://satanschildren.superxml.com/index3.php> or www.satanisme.nl. Those who take the time to read Smulo's thesis in context should realize it is a preliminary discussion. Readers are therefore cautioned against misconstruing its presence on these Satanist sites as if it represents the thin edge of a wedge for a creeping apostasy in Christian apologetic circles. This is not evidence (*pace* some conspiracy-minded critics) for a syncretistic surreptitious plot to dilute the gospel and create an anti-Christic one-world religion. Similarly Smulo has not been duped by Satanists to trick or lull him with misinformation. Neither is he (and for that matter this e-journal) a blind puppet in the hands of the 'invisible leaders' who allegedly have infiltrated and are controlling countercult



apologetics ministries. Cf. Smulo's related essay 'Methods and Perspectives in Understanding and Reaching Satanists,' *Sacred Tribes* 1/1.

¹⁰⁰ Wally Tope, 'Ethics of Evangelism,' *Areopagus*, 3/1 Advent 1989, 48-50.

¹⁰¹ Gilbert W. Scharffs, *The Truth About 'The God Makers'*, Salt Lake City UT: Publishers Press, 1986. Robert L. Brown & Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait To Deceive*, Vol. 4, Mesa AZ: Brownsworth Publishing, 1995.

¹⁰² Wayne L. Cowdrey, Howard A. Davis & Donald R. Scales, with Gretchen Passantino, *Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?* Santa Ana CA: Vision House, 1980.

¹⁰³ Edward E. Plowman, 'Mormon Manuscript Claims: Another Look,' *Christianity Today*, October 21, 1977, 38-39. Cf. Plowman's earlier article 'Who Really Wrote the Book of Mormon?' *Christianity Today*, July 8, 1977, 32-34.

¹⁰⁴ Jerald Tanner & Sandra Tanner, *Did Spaulding Write the Book of Mormon?* Salt Lake City UT: Modern Microfilm Company, 1977. A non-Mormon professional historian has assessed the Tanner's general apologetic work against Mormonism, see Lawrence Foster, 'Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner,' *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 17 Summer 1984, 35-60.

¹⁰⁵ Robert L. Brown & Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive*, Vol. 2, Rev. Ed. Mesa AZ: Brownsworth Publishing, 1986. Oliver Cowdery did not have any grandchildren.

¹⁰⁶ As competently argued by H. Wayne House, 'With an Apology to Arius: When and How Should We Deal With Heresies and Heretics?' *Journal of Christian Apologetics*, 1/1 Summer 1997, 29-47.

¹⁰⁷ Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies: The Image of Christ in the Mirror of Heresy and Orthodoxy from the Apostles to the Present*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1984, 21.

¹⁰⁸ This analogy derives from John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers: The World of the Occult*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1973, 20.

¹⁰⁹ Melton, *op. cit.*, 340.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Gabel, *False Consciousness: An Essay on Reification*, translated by Margaret N. Thompson, Oxford: Blackwell, 1975. Cf. Brendan F. J. Furnish, "Are Groups Real?" in Michael R. Leming, Raymond G. DeVries & Brendan F. J. Furnish (eds) *The Sociological Perspective: A Value-Committed Introduction*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1989, 93-103.

¹¹¹ Although not exactly following my illustration one can still see how evangelical beliefs can be distorted in this western Buddhist apologetics, A. L. De Silva, *Beyond Belief: A Buddhist Critique of Fundamentalist Christianity*, Sydney, Australia: Three Gem Publications, 1994. De Silva is a pseudonym for the Australian Buddhist monk known as Dhammika formerly Paul Boston. On these details see G. W. Trompf, "Two Australian Atheisms: A Review Essay," *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 9/1 1996, 87-92. For a more articulate Buddhist challenge to Christianity see Gunapala Dharmasiri, *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God*, Antioch CA: Golden Leaves Publishing Company, 1988.

¹¹² Ernst Benz, "On Understanding Non-Christian Religions," in Mircea Eliade & Joseph M. Kitagawa (eds) *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1959, 115-131.

¹¹³ *Ibid*, 120.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, 120-121.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 124-125.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 126, 127.

¹¹⁷ Garry Trompf, "Eulogy to Eric Sharpe," *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 14/1 2001, 128-131. Sharpe, whose academic career began in England, was the inaugural Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Sydney (1977-1996). He was noted for his productive scholarship on religious studies methodology, the history of Christian missions, and the encounter between Christians and Hindus since the 19th century. He profiled the missionary careers and contributions of A. N. Hogg (India), J. N. Farquhar (India) and Karl Ludvig Reichelt (China), and wrote a biography of the Swedish Lutheran Bishop Nathan Söderblom. He wrote essays about the life and career of Sadhu Sundar Singh. His premier textbook was *Comparative Religion: A History*, London: Duckworth, 1975, and revised in 1986. For more details on Sharpe's career and writings see the festschrift, Carole M. Cusack & Peter Oldmeadow (eds) *This Immense Panorama: Studies in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe*, Sydney: School of Studies in Religion the University of Sydney, 1999, 330-339. Sharpe was raised in the English Methodist



Church but shifted somewhat in his theological position and on one occasion remarked to me, 'I am too liberal to be a conservative but too conservative to be a liberal.' I did not agree with his personal theological stance but found him a most personable, affable and courteous scholar.

¹¹⁸ Eric J. Sharpe, *Understanding Religion*, London: Duckworth, 1983, 45-46.

¹¹⁹ Robert N. Minor, 'Understanding as the First Step in an Evangelical Approach to World Religions: Some Methodological Considerations,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 19/2 1976, 125. Minor was reared in evangelicalism, studying at Trinity College (BA 1967), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (MA 1969), and his PhD at the University of Iowa (1975). However Minor, whilst remaining a religious studies scholar with expertise on South Asian religions, appears to have moved on from his evangelical background, and is now a prominent figure in the homosexual community see his *Scared Straight: Why It's So Hard To Accept Gay People and Why It's So Hard To Be Human*, St. Louis MO: Humanity Works, 2001. This fact in no way vitiates Minor's remarks cited above.

¹²⁰ Sharpe, *Understanding Religion op. cit.*, 46.

¹²¹ Terry C. Muck, *The Mysterious Beyond: A Basic Guide to Studying Religion*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1993, 40-41.

¹²² See Alister E. McGrath, *A Passion for Truth*, Leicester: Apollos, 1996. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London: Unwin Hyman, 1989/Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1992. D. W. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism in Modern Britain and America: A Comparison,' in George A. Rawlyk & Mark A. Noll (eds) *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1993, 183-212, but especially see 183-192.

¹²³ For orientation start with John Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1997.

¹²⁴ Irving Hexham, 'Witnessing to the Cults,' *Crux*, 16/1 1980, 13.

¹²⁵ Harold L. Bussell, *Unholy Devotion: Why Cults Lure Christians*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1983. This was re-released as *By Hook or By Crook: How Cults Lure Christians*, New York: McCracken Press, 1993.

¹²⁶ The same problem also occurs when some evangelicals express considerable animosity towards scholars in phenomenology and sociology who have been involved in religious liberty court cases. The criticisms voiced often extend beyond the juridical or ethical issues and can include forms of character assassination.

¹²⁷ Norman L. Geisler & Ronald M. Brooks, *Come, Let Us Reason: An Introduction to Logical Thinking*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1990, 93-94, italics are in the original.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 94.

¹²⁹ *Loc. cit.* 94.

¹³⁰ Hexham & Poewe, *op. cit.*, 4.

¹³¹ Jill Martin-Rische, one of Martin's daughters, presents some counter arguments concerning Martin's two divorces. In response to questions over the revocation of her father's ordination in 1953 she reproduces an entry listing him from the 1988 California Southern Baptist Convention Annual where he was classified in the category "other ordained". See these twin entries "Marriages" <electronic document> www.waltermartin.org/marriage.html accessed December 1, 2000, and "Ordination" <electronic document> www.waltermartin.org/ordain.html accessed October 10, 2000.

¹³² Beckwith & Parrish, *See the gods fall op. cit.*, 205.

¹³³ John Drane, *What is the New Age Still Saying to the Church?* London: Marshall Pickering, 1999. Idem, *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*, Carlisle UK: Paternoster Press, 2000. Idem, *The McDonaldization of the Church*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001.

¹³⁴ Sire, *op. cit.*, 18.

¹³⁵ See Philip Johnson, "Juridical Apologists 1600 - 2000 AD: A Bio-Bibliographical Essay," *Global Journal of Classical Theology*, 3/1 April 2002, www.trinitysem.edu/journal/philjohnsonpap.html. Cf. Ross Clifford, *Leading Lawyers' Case for the Resurrection*, Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology & Public Policy, 1996.

¹³⁶ Geisler & Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason, op. cit.*, 95.

¹³⁷ See Robert L. Brown & Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait To Deceive*, Vol. 3, Mesa AZ: Brownsworth Publishing, 1986; Idem, *They Lie in Wait To Deceive*, Vol. 4, *op. cit.* Volume 3 attacks the credentials of Walter Martin, while volume 4 deals with the film "The God Makers" and *inter alia* attacks the credentials of Ed Decker and Richard Baer who appear in the film.



¹³⁸ Richard H. Bube, 'Pseudo-Science and Pseudo-Theology: (A) Cult and Occult,' *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 29/1 March 1977, 27, 28.

¹³⁹ For a profile on Hume's philosophy see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1959, 258-394.

¹⁴⁰ Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing/Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1984, 71.

¹⁴¹ For analyses of Hume's views see Brown, *ibid*, 79-100. Francis Beckwith, *David Hume's Argument Against Miracles: A Critical Analysis*, Lanham MD & London: University Press of America, 1989. R. Douglas Geivett & Gary R. Habermas (eds) *In Defense of Miracles*, Leicester: Apollos, 1997.

¹⁴² See Danny Korem & Paul Meier, *The Fakers: Exploding the Myths of the Supernatural*, Old Tappan NJ: Fleming Revell, 1980. Dan Korem, *Powers: Testing the Psychic & Supernatural*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988. André Kole & Al Janssen, *From Illusion to Reality*, San Bernadino CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1984. André Kole & Terry Holley, *Astrology & Psychic Phenomena*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1998. André Kole & Jerry MacGregor, *Mind Games*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1998.

¹⁴³ It should be noted in passing that Irving Hexham also has an avocational interest in the craft of prestidigitation.

¹⁴⁴ Kole & MacGregor, *op. cit.* 138-139.

¹⁴⁵ Korem, *Powers*, *op. cit.* 180.

¹⁴⁶ On 1 Samuel 28 see W. A. M. Beuken, '1 Samuel 28: The Prophet as "Hammer of Witches",' *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 6 1978, 3-17. Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, Dallas TX: Word Publishing, 1983, 270-272. Joyce Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1988, 158-164.

¹⁴⁷ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986, 237.

¹⁴⁸ Four different meanings of 'ob' are discussed by David E. Aune, 'Medium,' in G. W. Bromiley (ed) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Rev. Ed, Vol. 3, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986, 306-307.

¹⁴⁹ For clarity on the various schools of apologetic thought start with Steven B. Cowan (ed) *Five Views on Apologetics*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2000.

¹⁵⁰ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1998, 515.

¹⁵¹ John W. Drane, 'Methods and Perspectives in Understanding the New Age,' *Themelios*, 23/2 1998, 22-34. This same essay is reprinted in Drane's *Cultural Change and Biblical Faith*, op. cit., 18-35.

¹⁵² For case studies on apologetic conversations with actual seekers see Ross Clifford & Philip Johnson, *Jesus and the Gods of the New Age: Communicating Christ in Today's Spiritual Supermarket*, Oxford UK: Lion Publishing, 2001.

¹⁵³ I will readdress this matter in Part Four of this essay.

¹⁵⁴ Dispensational premillennial theology is explicated succinctly in Herman A. Hoyt, 'Dispensational Premillennialism,' in Robert G. Clouse (ed) *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977, 63-92. Other scholarly treatments include Robert P. Lightner, *The Last Days Handbook*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990, 55-71. Craig A. Blaising & Darrell L. Bock (eds) *Israel and the Church: Essays in Contemporary Dispensational Thought*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1992. Cf. Richard R. Reiter, Paul D. Feinberg, Gleason L. Archer & Douglas J. Moo, *The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulational?* Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1984.

¹⁵⁵ The standard expositions of conspiracy theories include Gary Allen with Larry Abraham, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, Seal Beach CA: Concord Press, 1971. Gary Allen, *Say "NO!" to the New World Order*, Seal Beach CA: Concord Press, 1987. Brian Wilshire, *The Fine Print: Australia's Special Role in the New World Order*, Round Corner, NSW: The Author, 1992. For critical analyses of conspiracy theories of society and politics see Andrew A. Campbell, *The Australian League of Rights: A Study in Political Extremism and Subversion*, Melbourne, VIC: Outback Press, 1978. Joseph R. Gusfield, 'Mass Society and Extremist Politics,' *American Sociological Review*, 27/1 1962, 19-30. Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1965. Seymour Martin Lipset & Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1970*, New York: Harper, 1970. Walter C. Utt, 'Illuminating the Illuminati,' *Liberty*, May/June 1979, 16-19 & 26-28.

¹⁵⁶ Hal Lindsey with C. C. Carlson, *The Terminal Generation*, Old Tappan NJ: Fleming Revell, 1976, 77-88. Dave Hunt, *The Cult Explosion*, Irvine CA: Harvest House, 1980.



¹⁵⁷ Lindsey, *ibid*, 88.

¹⁵⁸ Constance E. Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow: The New Age Movement and Our Coming Age of Barbarism*, Shreveport LA: Huntington House, 1983. Dave Hunt, *Peace, Prosperity and the Coming Holocaust: the New Age Movement in Prophecy*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1983.

¹⁵⁹ Tal Brooke, *When The World Will Be As One*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1989. Stan Deyo, *The Cosmic Conspiracy*, Morley, Western Australia: West Australian Texas Trading, 1978. Roy Livesey, *Understanding the New Age*, Chichester UK: New Wine, 1986. Texe Marrs, *Dark Secrets of the New Age*, Westchester IL: Crossway, 1987. Barry R. Smith, *Final Notice*, Marlborough, New Zealand: Barry Smith Family Evangelism, 1989, 284-377. Don E. Stanton, *Mystery 666*, Secunderabad India: Maranatha Revival Crusade, 1977, 139-146. John Weldon with Zola Levitt, *Encounters with UFOs*, Irvine CA: Harvest House, 1975, 97-115. Clifford Wilson & John Weldon, *Close Encounters: A Better Explanation*, San Diego CA: Master Books, 1978, 251-284. One prominent exception here is the Christian reconstructionist author Gary North who is committed to a postmillennial eschatology. Although he eschews dispensational theology altogether, North does espouse a conspiratorial view of the world in his *Conspiracy: A Biblical View*, Westchester IL: Crossway Books, 1986. North has also contributed to countercult literature with his book *Unholy Spirits: Occultism and New Age Humanism*, Fort Worth TX: Dominion Press, 1988. It was previously released by Arlington House in 1976 under the title *None Dare Call it Witchcraft*. The reconstructionists' theology has spurred quite some debate, see H. Wayne House & Thomas Ice, *Dominion Theology: Blessing or Curse? An Analysis of Christian Reconstructionism*, Portland OR: Multnomah Press, 1988. William S. Barker & W. Robert Godfrey (eds) *Theonomy: A Reformed Critique*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1990. Wayne G. Strickland (ed) *The Law, The Gospel, and The Modern Christian: Five Views*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1993. More popular accounts are given in Rodney Clapp, 'Democracy as Heresy: What Christian Reconstructionists Really Want,' *Christianity Today*, February 20, 1987, 17-23. Robert M. Bowman, 'The New Puritanism: A Preliminary Assessment of Reconstructionism,' *Christian Research Journal*, 10/3 Winter/Spring 1988, 23-27.

¹⁶⁰ See John A. Bloom, 'Truth via Prophecy' in John Warwick Montgomery (ed) *Evidence For Faith*, Dallas TX: Probe Ministries, 1991, 173-192. Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, rev.

ed. San Bernadino CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979, 141-177. Robert C. Newman, 'Fulfilled Prophecy as Miracle,' in R. Douglas Geivett & Gary R. Habermas (eds) *In Defense of Miracles*, Leicester: Apollos, 1997, 214-225.

¹⁶¹ It is not my purpose here to argue whether the academic approach to dispensational theology is correct or not, but merely to highlight the irresponsible and illegitimate claims made by pop writers. See note one above for more responsible scholarly expositions of dispensational theology.

¹⁶² The delightful expression 'pin-the-tail-on-the-Antichrist' derives from William Alnor, *Soothsayers of the Second Advent*, Old Tappan NJ: Fleming Revell, 1989.

¹⁶³ John Warwick Montgomery, 'Prophecy, Eschatology and Apologetics' in his *Christ Our Advocate*, Bonn, Germany: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft (Culture & Science Publications), 2002, 259-260. I have had access to the pre-publication manuscript of this book, which at the time of writing has not been released.

¹⁶⁴ Dwight Wilson, *Armageddon Now! The Premillenarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1977, 14-35. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1998. Richard Abanes, *End-Times Visions: The Road to Armageddon*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998. Cf. Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Foes From The Northern Frontier: Invading Hordes from the Russian Steppes*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1982, 19-27. For a non-Christian's impressions see Tim Callahan, 'The Fall of the Soviet Union & The Changing Game of Biblical Prophecy,' *Skeptic*, 3/2 1995, 92-97. Callahan's article was a critical review of Hal Lindsey's book *Planet Earth 2000 AD*, Palos Verdes: Western Front, 1994.

¹⁶⁵ Montgomery, 'Prophecy, Eschatology and Apologetics' *op. cit.* 259, 260.

¹⁶⁶ See Wardner's autobiography, Marilyn Manson & Neil Strauss, *The Long Hard Road Out of Hell*, New York NY: HarperPerennial, 1998. Also see Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: A Book of Sin, Devil Worship and Rock 'n' Roll*, London: Plexus, 1999. Of course one can adduce other factors that combined to make Wardner reject Christianity, but it must be noted that end-times conspiracies loom large in his mind as being a major reason for dumping the faith as foolish and fallacious.

¹⁶⁷ An exception is Dave Hunt who takes issue with postmillennial reconstructionists in *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1988. On the various eschatological schools of thought see Carl E. Armerding & W. Ward Gasque (eds) *Handbook of Biblical*



Prophecy, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1978. Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze: Sorting Out Evangelical Options*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992. John Warwick Montgomery, 'Millennium,' in G. W. Bromiley (ed) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1986, 356-361. Colin Weightman, *These Cry, Wolf! A Guide to Prophecy Today*, rev. ed. Adelaide, South Australia: New Creation Publications, 1981. Robert Clouse, *op. cit.* Robert Lightner, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁸ Paul Barnett, *The Truth About Jesus: The Challenge of Evidence*, Sydney: Aquila Press, 1994, 77-78.

¹⁶⁹ See Paul Barnett, *Bethlehem to Patmos: The New Testament Story*, Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989, 108-110.

¹⁷⁰ See Paul W. Barnett, 'Who were the BIASTAI?' *Reformed Theological Review*, 36/3 1977, 67-70. Also idem, *Jesus and the Logic of History*, Leicester: Apollos, 1997, 67-68.

¹⁷¹ Cf. P. W. Barnett, 'The Feeding of the Multitude in Mark 6/John 6,' in David Wenham & Craig Blomberg (eds) *Gospel Perspectives: The Miracles of Jesus*, Vol. 6, Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986, 273-293.

¹⁷² Paul Barnett, *The Two Faces of Jesus*, Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990, 33. Cf. his more lengthier and technical study Paul W. Barnett, 'The Jewish Sign Prophets - AD 40 -70: Their Intentions and Origin,' *New Testament Studies* 27 1981, 279-297.

¹⁷³ In addition to Barnett's essay on the sign prophets in *New Testament Studies*, also see J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1980. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1992, 593-618. Cf. William Sanford LaSor, *The Truth About Armageddon: What The Bible Says About The End Times*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1982, 120-122.

¹⁷⁴ Douglas Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986, 33-36. Elliot Miller, *A Crash Course on the New Age Movement*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1989, 193-206. SCP Staff, 'The Final Threat: Cosmic Conspiracy and End Times Speculation,' in Karen Hoyt & J. Isamu Yamamoto (eds) *The New Age Rage*, Old Tappan NJ: Fleming Revell, 1987, 185-201. Cf. Randy Frame, 'Is the Antichrist in the World Today?' *Christianity Today*, September 2, 1983, 55-56 & 62-65.

¹⁷⁵ Constance E. Cumbe, *A Planned Deception: The Staging of a New Age "Messiah"*, East Detroit MI: Pointe Publishers, 1985. Cf. the analysis of Cumbe's position in Bob Passantino & Gretchen Passantino, *Witch Hunt*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1990.

¹⁷⁶ Over the past 5 years a Eurasian gentleman named Charles has visited our Community of Hope booth at every International Festival for Mind*Body*Spirit held in Sydney, Australia. Charles, who is by profession an architect, espouses a dazzling and bewildering array of conspiracy theories related to the Church conspiring to suppress lost books of the Bible, international economic conspiracies run by the Illuminati, the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001 was engineered by the Illuminati, all blonde and blue-eyed people contain the genes of aliens and the aliens are the invisible rulers of the earth, etc. For more articulated versions of new age conspiracy views refer to the books by British conspiracy theorist David Icke such as *Children of the Matrix*, *The Biggest Secret*, *...And The Truth Shall Set You Free*, with bibliographical details available at his website www.davidicke.com. Also start with the following sites on the Internet at www.nexusmagazine.com, www.thebiblefraud.com, www.infowars.com. On a slightly different tack one should also note the American neo-pagan writer Robert Anton Wilson who espouses a conspiratorial cosmology in both his non-fiction books and in his novels, particularly in his book *Everything Is Under Control: Conspiracies, Cults and Cover-Ups* - for bibliographical details refer to Wilson's website at www.rawilson.com.

¹⁷⁷ This précis is for the report dated April 2002 and entitled 'The Compromised Ties of the Apologetics Ministries' <electronic document> at <http://watch.pair.com/watch-recent.html> accessed 12 August, 2002. The italics are in the original document.

¹⁷⁸ Although not addressing the issue of conspiratorial mindset the problem of obstinacy is lucidly handled in C. S. Lewis, 'On Obstinacy in Belief,' in *Screwtape Proposes a Toast and other pieces*, Glasgow: Fontana, 1977, 59-74.

¹⁷⁹ A small yet simple instance of this relates to information assembled about this e-journal *Sacred Tribes*. On July 13, 2002 I accessed the document entitled 'Smoke, Mirrors and Disinformation í The Compromised Ties of the Apologetics Ministries Evangelical Ministries to New Religions EMNR Part IV' <http://watch.pair.com/cult-emnr4.html>. At that date the document reproduced our promotional e-flyer announcing *Sacred Tribes* (along with editorial insertions from watch-pair). The flyer was undersigned by the three founding co-editors: John Morehead, Phil Johnson, John [sic] Trott. Adjacent to my name it stated "Phillip E. Johnson - Discovery Institute see below". The paragraph



below then identified Johnson as a Fellow of the Discovery Institute with books published by InterVarsity Press. I e-mailed the editors and advised them I was from Australia and they had wrongly assumed I was identical with the lawyer-apologist from the University of California, Berkeley who wrote *Darwin on Trial*. They apologized for the error and have since that date amended their site (I have retained a printed copy of the document as it stood on July 13, 2002). However here is the fundamental problem: prior to loading up their document on the Internet for public reading they did not make direct inquiries with any of the co-editors to clarify whether I was the lawyer-apologist. A basic biblical exhortation about going to one's brother first over a contentious issue was overlooked (Matt. 18:15-17). Of course if it is assumed we are not in Christ then there is still the basic scholarly maxim of consulting primary sources first. Aside from that trivial point of misidentification, it is asserted in the document that "Sacred Tribes represents EMNR's best attempt to tackle their missiological paradigm - reaching out to new religions. Well worth monitoring." It should be noted that these remarks appeared on the web before the launching of *Sacred Tribes* as a "live" publication on the Internet. None of the co-editors of *Sacred Tribes* was contacted; rather both John Morehead and myself had to initiate contact with the watch-pair site over their mistakes. The fundamental factual problem is the misconstruing of *Sacred Tribes'* origins and purpose. For the record *Sacred Tribes* is not an EMNR publication. It is not funded by EMNR or any apologetics ministry, and has no links to the Illuminati, the Rockefellers, the CFR, the Jesuits, the Learned Elders of Zion, the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians, the Mormons, the Communists, the Pew Foundation, *Christianity Today* or any other organization real or imagined. Mind-boggling as it may seem, *Sacred Tribes* is an independent publication created by the co-editors. All the written contributions, and all the web-design work has been done on a voluntary basis. *Cornerstone Magazine* has donated web-space on its site to permit the publication of *Sacred Tribes*. It is a labor of love and we are not the recipients of funds from those who are allegedly creating a one-world religion! So it has been erroneously assumed that because John Morehead is the current President of EMNR that this is the evidential proof that links the e-journal with EMNR. The phrase "reaching out to New Religions" is presumably intended to imply that the missiological paradigm advocated is actually a smoke screen for ecumenism. There is no acknowledgement here that reaching out to new religions might simply be another way of saying Christians are committed to evangelizing people who currently belong in new religions or cults.

Sacred Tribes is not a publication committed to creating tea and crumpets ecumenical relationships with new religions where everybody politely pretends that everyone's beliefs are gorgeous, wonderful and equally true. *Sacred Tribes* is concerned with mission to new religions. Mission involves proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only savior. At its simplest the editors of *Sacred Tribes* are saying that we need to become missionaries to the new religions and follow the example and methods that missionaries have been using to reach people for Jesus Christ ever since the Day of Pentecost.

¹⁸⁰ Primers include Gregory S. Camp, *Selling Fear: Conspiracy Theories and End-Times Paranoia*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1997. Paul Coughlin, *Secrets, Plots and Hidden Agendas*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

¹⁸¹ Utt, *op. cit.*, 27. Emphasis is Utt's.

¹⁸² Loc. cit., 27.

¹⁸³ Loc. cit., 27.

¹⁸⁴ John Warwick Montgomery, 'Down With Kookishness!' *Eternity*, July 1967, 9-10 & 34-35.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 10.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

¹⁸⁷ Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers*, *op. cit.*, 168.

¹⁸⁸ See Lipset & Raab, *op. cit.* Cf. G. Richard Fisher, 'The Present Day Revival of the Illuminati Theory,' *Journal of Pastoral Practice*, 3/2 1979, 122-127.

¹⁸⁹ Around 1990 I had a brief conversation with Dave Hunt in Sydney, Australia on this point and he had no idea what I was talking about. This conversation, which lasted for just over an hour, occurred at the then southern Sydney suburban home of Mr John Heininger an apologist who assisted in co-coordinating Dave Hunt's speaking itinerary. The conversation with Dave Hunt occurred in the presence of both Mr Heininger and Mr Chris Brown.

¹⁹⁰ See for example Ross Clifford & Philip Johnson, *Riding the Rollercoaster: How The Risen Christ Empowers Life*, Sydney, Australia: Strand Publishing, 1998, 103-116. For a slightly different perspective see Sue Patterson, 'Eschatological Apologetics,' *Anvil*, 16/4 1999, 269-280.

¹⁹¹ Edward F. Murphy, *The Handbook of Spiritual Warfare*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992. Bob Larson, *Larson's Book of Spiritual Warfare*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999.



¹⁹² James R. Lewis, 'Works of Darkness: Occult fascination in the novels of Frank E. Peretti,' in James R. Lewis (ed) *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1996, 339-350.

¹⁹³ "This Present Darkness is required reading for the students in my Christian World View class. It's an eye-opener. I highly recommend it." Dr Joe Aldrich, President, Multnomah School of the Bible. Adrich's remarks were given as an endorsement in a full-page advertisement for the novel that appeared in *Charisma & Christian Life*, May 1989, p 59.

¹⁹⁴ C. Peter Wagner (ed) *Territorial Spirits: Insights on Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare from Nineteen Christian Leaders*, Chichester: Sovereign World, 1991. C. Peter Wagner & F. Douglas Pennoyer (eds) *Wrestling With Dark Angels*, Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1990.

¹⁹⁵ Bryce A. Pettit, 'New Religious Movements and Missions: An Historical Overview,' *International Journal of Frontier Missions*, 15/3 1998, 125-134. This construct however is not without its critics see Mike Wakely, 'A critical look at a new "key" to evangelization,' *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, 31/2 1995, 152-162. A. Scott Moreau, 'Religious Borrowing as a Two-Way Street: An Introduction to Animistic Tendencies in the Euro-North American Context,' in Edward Rommen & Harold Netland (eds) *Christianity and the Religions*, Pasadena CA: William Carey Library, 1995, 166-183.

¹⁹⁶ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1994, 189-201.

¹⁹⁷ For useful expositions start with John Warwick Montgomery (ed) *Demon Possession*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1976. Peter T. O'Brien, 'Principalities and Powers and Their Relationship to Structures,' *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 6 1982, 50-61. Graham Twelftree, *Christ Triumphant: Exorcism Then and Now*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985. Edward N. Gross, *Miracles, Demons & Spiritual Warfare: An Urgent Call For Discernment*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1990. Also cf. Walter R. Martin, *Screwtape Writes Again*, Santa Ana CA: Vision House, 1975. Martin's book attempts to reanimate C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters*, by placing Screwtape's activities into the world of the 1970s. Its purpose is didactic on questions of Christian conduct and temptation, rather than being a strict treatise on spiritual warfare.

¹⁹⁸ Noel Gibson & Phyl Gibson, *Evicting Demonic Squatters & Breaking Bondages*, Sydney: Freedom in Christ Ministries Trust, 1987, 120.

¹⁹⁹ John Smulo, "'Spiritual Warfare' Profiles of Satanism: Are They Reliable?' *Sacred Tribes* 1/1.

²⁰⁰ Irving Hexham, 'The Evangelical Response to the New Age,' in James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (eds) *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992, 157.

²⁰¹ 'Christianity Today talks to Frank Peretti,' *Christianity Today*, December 15, 1989, 58.

²⁰² See Dan O'Neill, 'The Supernatural World of Frank Peretti,' *Charisma & Christian Life*, May 1989, 48-52.

²⁰³ On these observations and concerns see Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994, 203-215. Idem, 'Spiritual Warfare and Worldview,' *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 24/3 2000, 240-256. Also see A. Scott Moreau, *op. cit.*

²⁰⁴ Other concerns have been expressed in the following reviews: Dean C. Halverson, 'This Present Darkness: A Summary Critique,' *Christian Research Journal*, 12/3 Winter/Spring 1990, 28. Kim Riddlebarger, 'This Present Paranoia,' in Michael Scott Horton (ed) *Power Religion*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1992, 277ff. J. Lanier Burns, 'This Present Darkness,' *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 147/586 April-June 1990, 240-242. Michael G. Maudlin, 'Holy Smoke! The Darkness is Back,' *Christianity Today*, December 15, 1989, 58-59.

²⁰⁵ 'Christianity Today talks to Frank Peretti,' *op. cit.*, 59.

²⁰⁶ See Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions and the Media*, Lexington KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2000, 1-31. Ellis it should be noted is both an evangelical Lutheran and a specialist in folklore.

²⁰⁷ On this see Clinton E. Arnold, *Powers of Darkness*, Downers Grove IL & Leicester UK: InterVarsity Press, 1992. Also do not neglect D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10 to 13*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976. Idem, *The Christian Soldier: An Exposition of Ephesians 6:10 to 20*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977.

²⁰⁸ A sample of the literature includes: James R. Adair & Ted Miller (eds) *We Found Our Way Out*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1964. Idem, *Escape From Darkness*, Wheaton IL: Victor Books, 1982. Frankie Brogan, *Snared!* Basingstoke UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982. Tal Brooke, *Lord of the Air*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1990. Deborah (Linda Berg) Davis with Bill Davis, *The Children of God: The Inside*



Story, Basingstoke UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1985. Ted Dencher, *Why I Left Jehovah's Witnesses*, Rev. Ed. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1985. Deanna Durham, *Life Among the Moonies: Three Years in the Unification Church*, Plainfield NJ: Logos, 1981. Chris Elkins, *Heavenly Deception*, Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1980. Ruth Gordon, *Children of Darkness*, Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1988. Edmund C. Gruss (ed) *We Left Jehovah's Witnesses: A Non-Prophet Organization*, Phillipsburg NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co, 1974. Joe Hewitt, *I Was Raised a Jehovah's Witness*, Denver CO: Accent Books, 1979. Steve Kemperman, *Lord of the Second Advent*, Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1981. Una McManus & John Charles Cooper, *Not For A Million Dollars*, Eastbourne UK: Kingsway Publications, 1981. Latayne C. Scott, *Why We Left A Cult: Six People Tell Their Stories*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1993. Barbara Szandorowska, *Escape From The Guru*, Eastbourne UK: MARC, 1991. Bonnie Thielmann with Dean Merrill, *The Broken God*, Elgin IL: David C. Cook Publishing, 1979.

²⁰⁹ Sydney Watson, *The Lure of a Soul (Bewitched by Spiritualism)*, London: W. Nicholson, n.d. [1915]. Idem, *Escaped From the Snare: 'Christian Science'*, London: W. Nicholson, n.d. [1914]. Idem, *The Gilded Lie: 'Millennial Dawnism'*, London: W. Nicholson, n.d. [1914]. Watson is probably best remembered on both sides of the Atlantic for his twin eschatological novels: *In The Twinkling of an Eye* and *The Mark of The Beast*, both obvious forerunners to the LaHaye & Jenkins "Left Behind" series. On Watson's life see Sydney Watson, *Life's Look Out: An Autobiography*, London n.d. Idem, *Brighter Years: The Second Part of the Autobiography*, London, 1898. Lily Watson, *From Deck to Glory: Third Volume of the Late Sydney Watson's Life-Story*, London, 1920. More recent countercult novels include William D. Rodgers, *Cult Sunday*, Denver CO: Accent Books, 1979. Dave Hunt, *The Archon Conspiracy: A Novel*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990. Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, Westchester IL: Crossway, 1986; Idem, *Piercing the Darkness*, Westchester IL: Crossway, 1989. Sadly, none of these novels reaches the standard of characterization one finds in the novels of John Grisham, nor can they be seriously equated with literary classics (i.e. Jane Austen, Charles Dickens etc). Peretti's novels in particular suffer from poor characterization, redundant passages, and bad grammar. It is surely a sign of the intellectual impoverishment and poor aesthetic palate of evangelical Christians that can make bestsellers out of badly written novels. I worked between 1989-1990 in Scripture Union's Sydney bookstore and served a steady stream of Christian customers who

seriously believed Peretti's books were accurate descriptions of both new age and spiritual warfare. I have encountered that same problem when presenting seminars to Christians about evangelism to new age seekers. Sadly their preconceptions as gleaned from the novels can hinder any sensible sort of apologetic and mission outreach to seekers.

²¹⁰ For example the autobiography of the son of Madalyn Murray O'Hair who converted to Christianity: William J. Murray, *My Life Without God*, Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982. Also see the conversion stories of modern day philosophers in Thomas V. Morris (ed) *God and the Philosophers*, New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Contrast with Austin Miles, *Setting the Captives Free: Victims of the Church Tell Their Stories*, Buffalo NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. Skipp Porteous, *Jesus Doesn't Live Here Anymore: From Fundamentalist to Freedom Writer*, Buffalo NY: Prometheus Books, 1991.

²¹¹ Such as John Todd, Mike Warnke, Lauren Stratford, Rebecca Brown, and Doreen Irvine. On Todd see Darryl E. Hicks & David A. Lewis, *The Todd Phenomenon*, Harrison: New Leaf, 1979. Also Ed Plowman, 'The Legend(s) of John Todd,' *Christianity Today*, 2 February, 1979, 38-40 & 42. On Warnke see Mike Hertenstein & Jon Trott, *Selling Satan*, Chicago IL: Cornerstone, 1993. On Lauren Stratford see Gretchen Passantino, Bob Passantino & Jon Trott, 'Satan's Sideshow: The True Lauren Stratford Story,' *Cornerstone* 18, 1990, 24-28. On Rebecca Brown see G. Richard Fisher, Paul R. Blizard & M. Kurt Goedelman, 'Drugs, Demons and Delusions,' *The Quarterly Journal* [Personal Freedom Outreach], 9/4 1989, 1, 8-15. On Doreen Irvine see Bill Ellis, *Raising The Devil: Satanism, New Religions and the Media*, Lexington KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000, 160-165 & 199-201. Also see R. A. Gilbert, *Casting the First Stone*, Dorset UK: Element Books, 1993, 44-45, 144-145 & 154.

²¹² On Schaeffer's life and thought see Louis Gifford Parkhurst, *Francis Schaeffer The Man and His Message*, Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1985.

²¹³ See *The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer*, 5 Vols. Westchester IL: Crossway, 1982, Vol.1: 57-90; Vol. 5: 9-19.

²¹⁴ Os Guinness, *The Dust of Death*, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1973. Vishal Mangalwadi, *In Search of Self: Beyond the New Age*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992. Idem, *The World of Gurus*, Rev. Ed. Chicago IL: Cornerstone, 1992. Idem, *Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Postmodern Hindu*, Carlisle, Cumbria: OM Publishing, 1996.

²¹⁵ Also see Francis Schaeffer, 'Christian Faith and Human Rights,' *Simon Greenleaf Law Review*, 2 1982-83, 3-12. Schaeffer delivered this lecture in Strasbourg on July 25, 1982.



²¹⁶ This approach is also handsomely represented by Hans Rookmaaker, *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970. Cf. the college student primer by James W. Sire, *Discipleship of the Mind*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990. Also refer to the recent Zondervan series of Christian travel guidebooks edited by Irving Hexham.

²¹⁷ For positive and negative evangelical assessments of Schaeffer's apologetic style see Stuart Cunningham, 'Towards a Critique of Francis Schaeffer's Thought,' *Interchange*, no. 24 1978 205-221. Ronald W. Ruegsegger (ed) *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1986. Thomas V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer's Apologetic: A Critique*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1987. D. L. Roper, 'A Sympathetic Criticism of Francis Schaeffer's Writings,' *Interchange* no. 41 1987, 41-55. Cf. the sympathetic observations of Irving Hexham, 'The Evangelical Response to the New Age,' in James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (eds) *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992, 153-154 & 321-322. A very negative liberal appraisal of Schaeffer's position is presented by George W. Ramsey, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Reconstructing Israel's Early History*, London: SCM Press, 1982, 107-115.

²¹⁸ Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture*, Toronto, Canada: Wedge, 1979. Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1948. On Carnell see Gordon R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, 176-284. John A. Sims, *Edward John Carnell: Defender of the Faith*, Washington DC: University Press of America, 1979. Idem, *Missionaries to the Skeptics: Christian Apologists for the Twentieth Century* C. S. Lewis, E. J. Carnell and Reinhold Niebuhr, Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1995, 91-148. Cf. the sceptical view of Carnell's effectiveness in Rudolph Nelson, *The Making and Unmaking of an Evangelical Mind: The Case of Edward John Carnell*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987. For the historical context in which Carnell operated see George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1987. On the topic of presuppositions and verification also see Mark M. Hanna, *Crucial Questions in Apologetics*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1981. Ronald B. Mayers, *Both/And: A Balanced Apologetic*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Idem, 'Both/And: A Biblical Alternative to the Presuppositional/Evidential Debate,' in Michael Bauman, David W. Hall

& Robert C. Newman (eds) *Evangelical Apologetics*, Camp Hill PA: Christian Publications, 1996, 35-53.

²¹⁹ Ellwood Norquist, *We Are One: A Challenge to Traditional Christianity*, Tuscon AZ: Cosmic Connection, 1995.

²²⁰ Harold Netland, 'Toward Contextualized Apologetics,' *Missiology*, 16/3 July 1988, 289-290.

²²¹ Robert N. Minor, 'Understanding As The First Step In An Evangelical Approach To World Religions: Some Methodological Considerations,' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 19/2 1976, 125.

²²² *Loc. cit.*

²²³ William Sargant, *The Battle for the Mind*, Rev. Ed. London: Pan, 1959.

²²⁴ Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China*, Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1989 [1961]. Extensive bibliographical coverage is furnished in John A. Saliba, *Psychiatry and the Cults: An Annotated Bibliography*, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1987.

²²⁵ On the secular anti-cult movement's bibliographical history see Anson D. Shupe, David G. Bromley & Donna L. Oliver, *The Anti-Cult Movement in America: A Bibliography and Historical Survey*, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1984. Cf. Anson Shupe & David G. Bromley (eds) *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1994. This latter volume includes essays from different parts of the world describing and assessing the anti-cult movement, but also includes an essay by mind-control exponent Steve Hassan. Also see James A. Beckford, *Cult Controversies: The Societal Response to New Religious Movements*, London & New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985. J. Gordon Melton, 'Anti-cultists in the United States: An Historical Perspective,' in Bryan Wilson & Jamie Cresswell (eds) *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, 213-233.

²²⁶ Ted Patrick with Tom Dulack, *Let Our Children Go!* New York: Ballantine Books, 1977. Cf. Helen Larsen & Rick Larsen, *Cult Encounter*, Sydney: RCS Books, 1997.

²²⁷ Max Ehrlich, *The Cult*, Falmouth, Cornwall: Mayflower/Granada, n.d. Anita Burgh, *The Cult*, London: Orion, 1997. Lloyd Davies, *Cult and Countercult*, Perth, Western Australia: Artbooks, 1984.

²²⁸ See Steve K. Dubrow-Eichel, 'Deprogramming: A Case Study. Part 1: Personal Observations of the Group Process,' *Cultic Studies Journal*, 6/2



1989 [CSJ Special Issue]. Idem, 'Deprogramming: A Case Study. Part 2: Conversation Analysis,' *Cultic Studies Journal*, 7/2 1990, 174-216. Steve Hassan who primarily advocates non-coercive exit counselling nonetheless admits rather fleetingly to undertaking "covert interventions" see his *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, Rev. Ed. Rochester VT: Park Street Press, 1990, 124.

²²⁹ Hassan, *ibid*, 48ff.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, 59-67.

²³¹ *Ibid*, 56.

²³² *Ibid*, 112-131. Also see Carol Giambalvo, *Exit Counseling: A Family Intervention*, Bonita Springs FL: American Family Foundation, 1992.

²³³ Flo Conway & Jim Siegelman, *Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change*, Rev. Ed. New York: Stillpoint, 1995. Kay Marie Porterfield, *Blind Faith: Recognizing and Recovering From Dysfunctional Religious Groups*, Minneapolis MN: CompCare Publishers, 1993. Louise Samways, *Dangerous Persuaders*, Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin, 1994.

²³⁴ J. B. Lippincott released the original edition of their book in 1978. They subsequently published 'Information Disease: Have the cults created a new mental illness?' *Science Digest*, January 1982, 86, 88, 90-92. Idem, *Holy Terror*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1982.

²³⁵ See their paper 'Cracking the Riddle of the Cults: Frontiers of Freedom in an Information Age,' 12 page mimeograph of address delivered on October 30, 1987 at the Cult Awareness National Conference, Pittsburgh.

²³⁶ Raphael Aron, *Cults too good to be true*, Sydney: HarperCollins, 1999. Michael D. Langone (ed) *Recovery From Cults*, New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co, 1993. Margaret Thaler Singer & Janja Lalich, *Cults in our Midst*, San Francisco CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995. Also see Madeleine Landau Tobias & Janja Lalich, *Captive Hearts Captive Minds*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994.

²³⁷ Ronald M. Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing and the Extremist Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1977. Joel A. MacCollam, *Carnival of Souls*, New York: Seabury Press, 1979. Jack Sparks, *The Mindbenders: A Look At Current Cults*, 2nd Ed. Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1979. Steve Kemperman, *Lord of the Second Advent*, Ventura CA: Regal Books, 1981, Paul R. Martin, *Cult Proofing Your Kids*, Grand Rapids

MI: Zondervan, 1993. MacCollam did allow room for deprogramming in his book, pp. 114-134. Kemperman was a Moonie who underwent deprogramming. However, Paul Martin only opts for non-coercive exit counseling. Others who accept the mind-control thesis include David A. Reed, *Jehovah-Talk: The Mind-Control Language of Jehovah's Witnesses*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1997. Randall Watters, *Understanding Mind Control Among Jehovah's Witnesses*, Manhattan Beach CA: Free Minds Inc, n.d.

²³⁸ J.A.C. Brown, *Techniques of Persuasion: From Propaganda to Brainwashing*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1963, 230-231. The material I have omitted consisted of illustrative quotes Brown gave from Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' and also from a Rev. B. S. Taylor.

²³⁹ Sargant, *op. cit.*, 105-107 & 126-127.

²⁴⁰ Larry D. Shinn, 'Who Gets To Define Religion? The Conversion/Brainwashing Controversy,' *Religious Studies Review*, 10/3 July 1993, 198.

²⁴¹ *Ibid*, 199.

²⁴² James Bjornstad, 'Cultic and Christian Conversion: Is There A Difference?' *Update: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements*, 6/1 March 1982, 57 & 58. Cf. Bjornstad's earlier essay, 'The Deprogramming and Rehabilitation of Modern Cult Members,' *Journal of Pastoral Practice*, 2/1 Winter 1978, 113-129.

²⁴³ Chris Elkins, *What Do You Say To A Moonie?* Wheaton IL: Tyndale House, 1981, 21-22.

²⁴⁴ Irving Hexham & Karla Poewe, *Understanding Cults and New Religions*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing, 1986, 9-10.

²⁴⁵ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Conversions: Psychological and Spiritual*, London: IVF, 1959. Owen Brandon, *The Battle for the Soul*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960. Robert O. Ferm, *The Psychology of Christian Conversion*, Westwood NJ: Fleming Revell, 1959. Cf. Julius R. Mantey, 'Repentance and Conversion,' in Carl F. H. Henry (ed) *Basic Christian Doctrines*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1962, 192-198.

²⁴⁶ See James T. Richardson, 'Conversion, Brainwashing, and Deprogramming in New Religions,' *Update: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements*, 6/1 March 1982, 34-49. David G. Bromley & James T. Richardson (eds) *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy*, New York & Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983. Thomas Robbins, 'Goodbye to Little Red Ridinghood,' *Update: A Quarterly Journal on New Religious Movements*, 10/2 June 1986, 5-18. *Idem*,



Cults, Converts & Charisma, London, Newbury Park, Beverly Hills & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1988. David G. Bromley (ed) *Falling From The Faith: Causes and Consequences of Religious Apostasy*, Newbury Park, Beverly Hills, London & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1988. Eileen Barker, *New Religious Movements: A Practical Introduction*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1989, 17-23. Janet Liebman Jacobs, *Divine Disenchantment: Deconverting from New Religions*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989. Lorne L. Dawson, *Comprehending Cults*, Toronto & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 102-127.

²⁴⁷ See John Drane, *Faith in a Changing Culture*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1997, 91-107.

²⁴⁸ John Warwick Montgomery, *The Shape of the Past*, Rev. Ed. Minneapolis MN: Bethany, 1975, 317-318.

²⁴⁹ Ken Levitt with Ceil Rosen, *Kidnapped For My Faith*, Van Nuys CA: Bible Voice, 1978.

²⁵⁰ Randy Frame, 'And Now - Deprogramming of Christians is Taking Place,' *Christianity Today*, April 22, 1983, 31.

²⁵¹ William M. Alnor & Ronald M. Enroth, 'Ethical Problems in Exit Counseling,' *Christian Research Journal*, 14/3 Winter 1992, 14-19. Cf. the reply of Michael D. Langone & Paul R. Martin, 'Deprogramming, Exit Counseling and Ethics: Clarifying the Confusion,' *Christian Research Journal*, 15/3 Winter 1993, 46-47.

²⁵² Dick Sutphen, *Radical Spirituality*, Malibu CA: Valley of the Sun, 1995, 191-206.

²⁵³ Conway & Siegelman, 'Cracking the Riddle', *op. cit.*, 5.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 6.

²⁵⁵ *Loc. cit.*

²⁵⁶ Hexham & Poewe, *op. cit.*, 9.

²⁵⁷ See my review in *Sacred Tribes* 1/1 of John Warwick Montgomery's *The Repression of Evangelism in Greece* for further thoughts. Cf. the discussion of legal problems concerning the Christian and the cults in John Eidsmoe, *The Christian Legal Advisor*, Rev. Ed. Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1987, 325-339.

²⁵⁸ See Alan Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995, 50-80. On the Passantino's views see "Overcoming the Bondage of

Victimization: A Critical Evaluation of Cult Mind Control Theories' <electronic document> http://answers.org/cultsandreligions/mind_control.html accessed 12 August, 2002. A modified version of this also appears as chapter 4 'Critiquing Cult Mind Control Model' in the posthumous edition of Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Rev. Ed. Minneapolis MN: Bethany, 1997, 49-78. For a response to the Passantino's position see Lawrence A. Pile, 'Mind Control: Real or Imagined?' *Wellspring Messenger*, 6/1 January-March 1995, 1-4.

²⁵⁹ See note 55 above for bibliographical details on these three books.

²⁶⁰ See the discussions in Richard Quebedeaux & Rodney Sawatsky (eds) *Evangelical-Unification Dialogue*, New York: Rose of Sharon Press, 1979.

²⁶¹ John Allan, *The Rising of the Moon: An Examination of Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church*, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1980. James Bjornstad, *The Moon is not the Son*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1976, reissued as *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1984. Everett N. Hunt, 'Moon Sun Myung and the Tong-Il (Unification Church),' in David J. Hesselgrave (ed) *Dynamic Religious Movements*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1978, 103-127. Zola Levitt, *The Spirit of Sun Myung Moon*, Irvine CA: Harvest House, 1976. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Rev. Ed. Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1985, 338-344, and then the posthumous edition published in 1997, 351-367. J. Isamu Yamamoto, *The Puppet Master: An Inquiry into Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977. Idem, *Unification Church*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1995.

²⁶² Attention is devoted to ways in which churches can end up on the fringes and be guilty of aberrant practices in Ronald M. Enroth, *Churches That Abuse*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1992. Enroth's sequel, *Recovering From Churches That Abuse*, Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 1994, has been the subject of some controversy particularly over what some critics allege is a one-sided approach. Both sides have expressed considerable angst over the recounting of stories by former members of JPUSA in this book. I will not revisit that acrimonious debate here.

²⁶³ At one time or another, each of these three individuals, have participated in our outreach in new age festivals in Sydney, Australia.

²⁶⁴ 'Why I Joined a Cult í and Why I Left', *HIS Magazine*, May 1984, 9. Elkins' full story is recounted in *Heavenly Deception*, *op. cit.*, see note 55 above.



²⁶⁵ Glenn A. Igleheart, *Church Members and Nontraditional Religious Groups*, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985. Also cf. these discussions in J. Gordon Melton & Robert L. Moore, *The Cult Experience: Responding to the New Religious Pluralism*, New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982, 112-123. John A. Saliba, *Perspectives on New Religious Movements*, London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995, 198-234. Paul R. Martin, 'Counseling the Former Cultist,' and Vernon C. Grounds, 'Self-Deception from the Perspectives of Theology and Psychology,' in Eric Pement (ed) *Contend For the Faith*, Chicago IL: Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, 1992, 262-273 & 288-298. Of related interest is Janis Hutchinson, *Out of the Cults and into the Church: Understanding and Encouraging Ex-Cultists*, Grand Rapids MI: Kregel, 1994. I well recall how stymied my lecturer in pastoral theology, Geoff Petersen, felt about trying to deal with people in cults. Even with his post-graduate credentials and decades of experience in clinical pastoral care, he was unsure how to handle cult devotees.

²⁶⁶ Josh McDowell & Don Stewart, *Understanding the Occult*, San Bernardino CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1982, 14-15.

²⁶⁷ John Warwick Montgomery, *Principalities and Powers op. cit.*

²⁶⁸ John Warwick Montgomery (ed) *Demon Possession*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1976. Davies' essay 'Victims Become Victors' appears on pages 300-308.

²⁶⁹ Richard Abanes, *Cults, New Religious Movements, and Your Family*, Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 1998, 44, and see endnote no. 24 on page 274. In this particular instance what makes the citation error problematic is that a list of eight points is given, with part of the material using quotation marks, but not all of it. When compared with the original essay it is evident that Davies' points have been slightly rearranged, and basically the whole list should have been enclosed in quotation marks rather than the manner in which the apologist has presented it. Abanes' footnote refers to McDowell & Stewart's book as *Handbook of Today's Religions*. However, the handbook is a merely an uncorrected omnibus version of 4 previously issued titles: *Understanding the Cults*, *Understanding the Occult*, *Understanding Non-Christian Religions* and *Understanding Secular Religions*. I recently inspected the *Handbook* version and verified that the bibliographical error has not been amended.

²⁷⁰ Edwin M. Yamauchi, 'Immanuel Velikovsky's Catastrophic History,' *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, 25/4 December 1973, 134-139.

²⁷¹ See the critical symposium of Australian scholars in E. W. Castle & B. B. Thiering (eds) *Some Trust in Chariots*, Perth & Sydney: Westbooks, 1972. Cf. Richard R. Lingeman, 'Erich von Daniken's Genesis' *New York Times Book Review*, March 31, 1974, 6.

²⁷² Start with A. J. Hoover, *Don't You Believe It!* Chicago: Moody Press, 1982. Geisler & Brooks, *Come Let Us Reason*, *op. cit.* Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, 3rd Ed. New York: Macmillan, 1968. On historiography see David Bebbington, *Patterns in History*, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1979. Roy Swanstrom, *History in the Making*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978. Cf. Ronald A. Wells, *History Through The Eyes of Faith*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. On juridical reasoning see G. Abrahams, *The Legal Mind*, London: H. F. L., 1954. Cf. the audio-lecture by John Warwick Montgomery, 'Good and Bad Legal Reasoning Thinking Straight as a Lawyer', Edmonton Canada: Canadian Institute for Law, Theology & Public Policy, 1997. [Available via www.ciltpp.com]. Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1958. On the issue of sound thinking skills in countercult apologetics refer to Bob Passantino & Gretchen Passantino, *Witch Hunt*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990. Cf. Bob Passantino, 'Religious Research: Theory, Techniques, and Application,' in Eric Pement (ed) *Contend for the Faith*, Chicago: Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, 1992, 26-69.

²⁷³ Irving Hexham, 'The Evangelical Response to the New Age,' in James R. Lewis & J. Gordon Melton (eds) *Perspectives on the New Age*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992, 158. Cf. remarks on footnote documentation in Douglas E. Cowan, 'Reflections on Louisville: The Christian Countercult in Conversation,' <electronic document> www.cesnur.org/2002/slc/cowan.htm, accessed July 6, 2002.

²⁷⁴ John P. Newport, *The New Age Movement and the Biblical Worldview: Conflict and Dialogue*, Grand Rapids MI: William Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1998. Two examples will suffice. First, examine Newport's section entitled 'Reincarnation and Karma,' 6-7. Both the first and last paragraphs under this sub-heading have been plagiarized verbatim from J. Gordon Melton, Jerome Clark & Aidan A. Kelly (eds) *New Age Almanac*, Detroit MI: Visible Ink, 1991, 89. The second example is found under the sub-heading 'The Devil's Way Will Never Work,' 595. Examine Newport's first paragraph as well as the lead sentence of the second paragraph and then compare that with Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1989, 276-277. Here I must flag a typesetter's error with the opening sentence to chapter 5 from my co-authored book with Ross Clifford, *Jesus and the Gods of the New Age*, Oxford UK: Lion Publishing, 2001, 66. The opening sentence



concerning astrology as an antique form of divination is actually the lead sentence to the first quotation given at the top of the page, which derives from Emile Grillo De Givry. This error was missed when checking the manuscript's proofs and will be amended in any future edition.

²⁷⁵ Kel Richards, *An Outbreak of Darkness*, Sydney: Beacon Communications, 1996, 318-319, has material uplifted from Tony Morphet, *A Hole in my Ceiling*, London & Sydney: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985, 11, 13-14.

²⁷⁶ Robert H. Schuller, *Peace of Mind Through Possibility Thinking*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1977.

²⁷⁷ Dave Hunt & T. A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1985, 132, citing Schuller, *op. cit.* For other perspectives on Schuller's theology see the interview conducted by Kenneth S. Kantzer, David F. Wells and V. Gilbert Beers, 'Hard Questions for Robert Schuller About Sin & Self-esteem,' *Christianity Today*, August 10, 1984, 14-20. Cf. Kenneth S. Kantzer & Paul W. Fromer, 'A Theologian Looks at Schuller,' *Christianity Today*, August 10, 1984, 22-24. Also see Robert Schuller, 'Schuller Clarifies His View of Sin,' *Christianity Today*, August 10, 1984, 21.

²⁷⁸ Schuller, *Peace of Mind op. cit.*, 115.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 117.

²⁸⁰ Loc. Cit., 117.

²⁸¹ See the charismatic reaction in Thomas F. Reid, Mark Virkler, James A. Laine & Alan Langstaff, *Seduction?? A Biblical Response*, New Wilmington PA: Son-Rise Publications, 1986. A reconstructionists response came in Gary DeMar & Peter Leithart, *The Reduction of Christianity: A Biblical Response to Dave Hunt*, Fort Worth TX: Dominion Press/Atlanta G: American Vision Press, 1988. A round-table forum came in Richard Foster, David Seamands, James Sire & Eric Pement, 'Under Fire: Two Christian Leaders Respond to Accusations of New Age Mysticism,' *Christianity Today*, September 18, 1987, 17-21. Cf. the book review by Douglas Groothuis, *Moody Monthly*, January 1986, 63-65. Brant Pelphrey, 'Negative Thinking in a "Positive" Age,' *Areopagus*, 1/1 Fall 1987, 42-45. Also see Hunt's rebuttals in *Beyond Seduction: A Return to Biblical Christianity*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1987. Idem, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1988.

²⁸² For a more extensive critical examination of Dave Hunt's writings from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge see Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness: Propaganda, Reality-Maintenance, and Christian Anticult Apologetics*, PhD Thesis, University of Calgary, 1999, 367-592. Cf. Beckwith & Parrish, *See the gods fall op. cit.*, 40-49.

²⁸³ The TV series starred Clayton Moore as the Lone Ranger and Jay Silverheels as Tonto.

²⁸⁴ Many evangelicals, charismatics and Pentecostals alike have expressed considerable disquiet about aberrational doctrines in the positive confession or Word-Faith movement. For a spectrum of critical viewpoints refer to the following: Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel*, Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Andrew Brandon, *Health and Wealth*, Eastbourne East Sussex: Kingsway Publications, 1987. Florence Bulle, *God Wants You Rich and other enticing doctrines*, Minneapolis MN: Bethany House, 1983. Charles Farah, *From the Pinnacle of the Temple: Faith vs. Presumption*, Plainfield NJ: Logos International, n.d. Hank Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1993. Michael Horton (ed) *The Agony of Deceit*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1990. Joe Magliato, *The Wall Street Gospel*, Eugene OR: Harvest House, 1981. D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988. Cf. the personal story Larry Parker with Don Tanner, *We Let Our Son Die*, Irvine CA: Harvest House, 1980.

²⁸⁵ These details are summarized from J. Gordon Melton (ed) *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 4th Ed. Detroit: Gale Research, 1993, 471.

²⁸⁶ Hobart E. Freeman, *Every Wind of Doctrine*, Warsaw IN: Faith Ministries & Publications, 1974.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁸⁸ Douglas Groothuis, *Christianity That Counts*, Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1994, 64. This chapter was first published as 'Apologetics, Truth and Humility,' *Christian Research Journal*, 14/4 Spring 1992, 7.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 65.

²⁹⁰ Marshall McLuhan & Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.

²⁹¹ Marcello Zago, 'The New Millennium and the Emerging Religious Encounters,' *Missiology*, 28/1 January 2000, 5.



²⁹² Mervyn F. Bendle, 'Globalization, Neo-Humanism and Religious Diversity,' *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 12/2 1999, 59. The words in 'bold' are in the original text.

²⁹³ Johannes Aagaard, 'Conversion, Religious Change, and the Challenge of New Religious Movements,' *Cultic Studies Journal*, 8/2 1991, 96.

²⁹⁴ John Naisbitt, *Megatrends Asia: The Eight Asian Megatrends that are Changing the World*, London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 1995, 245.

²⁹⁵ G. W. Trompf, *Melanesian Religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

²⁹⁶ G. W. Trompf (ed) *Cargo Cults and Millenarian Movements: Transoceanic Comparisons of New Religious Movements*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1990.

²⁹⁷ Steve Miles, *Consumerism as a Way of Life*, Thousand Oaks CA, London & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1998. Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives*, London: Profile Books, 1999. Robert Goldman & Stephen Papon, *Nike Culture: The Sign of the Swoosh*, Thousand Oaks CA, London & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000.

²⁹⁸ G. W. Trompf, 'Ethnicity, Missiology and Indigenous Theology,' in Carole M. Cusack & Peter Oldmeadow (eds) *This Immense Panorama: Studies in Honour of Eric J. Sharpe*, Sydney: School of Studies in Religion University of Sydney, 1999, 150. Italics in the original text.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 151.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 152-153. On other trajectories with indigeneity and the reworking of spirituality see Tony Swain, 'The Mother Earth Conspiracy: an Australian Episode,' *Numen*, 38 June 1991, 3-26. Jane Mulcock, '(Re)discovering our indigenous selves: the nostalgic appeal of Native Americans and other generic indigenes,' *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 14/1 Autumn 2001, 45-64. David Pecotic, 'Three Aboriginal Responses to New Age Religion: A Textual Impression,' *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 14/1 Autumn 2001, 65-81.

³⁰¹ George McKay (Ed) *DiY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain*, London: Verso, 1998. Simon Reynolds, *Generation Ecstasy: into the World of Techno and Rave Culture*, Boston: Little Brown, 1998. Benjamin Shepard & Ronald Hayduk (eds) *From ACT UP to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*, London: Verso, 1999. Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative*

Geographies of Modernity, London & New York: Routledge, 1991. Tracey Skelton & Gill Valentine (Eds) *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures*, London & New York: Routledge, 1998. Helen Thomas (ed) *Dance in the City*, London: MacMillan, 1997. On the Goth culture also see Jimmy Stewart, 'Be Afraid of the Dark,' *Charisma*, August 2001, 38-41. A primer on vampires is J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead*, Detroit MI: Gale Research, 1994.

³⁰² Nevill Drury, *The History of Magic in the Modern Age*, London: Constable, 2000, 234-254. Graham Harvey, *Contemporary Paganism: Listening People, Speaking Earth*, New York: New York University Press, 1997, 122-125. Graham St. John, "'Heal Thy Self - thy Planet': ConFest, Eco-Spirituality and the Self/Earth Nexus,' *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 14 2001, 97-112. For other neo-pagan eco-activist approaches start with Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics*, Boston: Beacon, 1988.

³⁰³ See Alan Dearling (ed) *No Boundaries: New Travellers on the Road Outside of England*, Lyme Regis UK: Enabler Publications, 1998. Alan Dearling with Brendan Hanley (Mook Bahloo), *Alternative Australia - celebrating cultural diversity*, Lyme Regis UK: Enabler Publications, 2000. Richard Lowe & William Shaw, *Travellers: Voices of the New Age Nomads*, London: Fourth estate, 1993. Michael I. Niman, *People of the Rainbow: a nomadic utopia*, Knoxville TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

³⁰⁴ See Douglas Ezzy, 'The Commodification of Witchcraft,' *Australian Religion Studies Review* 14/1 Autumn 2001, 31-44. Adam Possamai, 'Secrecy and Consumer Culture: An Exploration of Esotericism in Contemporary Western Society using the work of Simmel and Baudrillard,' *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 15/1 Autumn 2002, 44-56.

³⁰⁵ On the original Protestant setting for the term see George M. Marsden, 'Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism,' *Church History*, 46/2 June 1977, 215-232. Idem, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Idem, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1991. Cf. David Parker, 'The Evangelical Heritage of Australian Protestantism: Towards an Historical Perspective,' *Evangelical Quarterly*, 57/1 January 1985, 43-62. For its wider usage see Norman J. Cohen (ed) *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A View From Within; A Response From Without*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1990. Martin E. Marty & R. Scott Appleby (eds) *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Chicago



& London: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Niels C. Nielsen, *Fundamentalism, Mythos, and World Religions*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.

³⁰⁶ As expressed in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 12 Vols. Chicago: Testimony Publishing Co, 1910-1915. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity & Liberalism*, reprint ed. Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1981 [1923].

³⁰⁷ For background see Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975. James R. Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979. Walter Phillips, 'The Defence of Christian Belief in Australia 1875-1914: The Responses to Evolution and Higher Criticism,' *Journal of Religious History*, 9/4 1977, 402-423.

³⁰⁸ See George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1987. Cf. Robert Wuthnow, *The Struggle for America's Soul: Evangelicals, Liberals & Secularism*, Grand Rapids MI: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1989.

³⁰⁹ William D. Dinges & James Hitchcock, 'Roman Catholic Traditionalism and Activist Conservatism in the United States,' in Marty & Appleby, *op. cit.*, 66-141. Karl Pruter & J. Gordon Melton, *The Old Catholic Sourcebook*, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1983, 109-122. Cf. David Coffey, 'Evangelical Catholicism,' *The Australasian Catholic Record*, 61/2 April 1984, 158-163. Leland J. White, 'Fundamentalism and "Fullness of Christianity": Catholicism's Double Challenge,' *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 18/2 April 1988, 50-59.

³¹⁰ On how the West misperceives the Orient see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978. On Islamic fundamentalism start with W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*, London & New York: Routledge, 1988. Sir Norman Anderson, *Islam in the Modern World: A Christian Perspective*, Leicester: Apollos, 1990. Also see the essays by John O. Voll, Abdulaziz A. Sachedina, Mumtaz Ahmad and Manning Nash in Marty & Appleby, *op. cit.* On the mutual misperceptions of the West and the Islamic world see William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions*, London & New York: Routledge, 1991.

³¹¹ G. W. Trompf, *Payback: The Logic of Retribution in Melanesian Religions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Idem, *Early Christian Historiography: Narratives of Retributive Justice*, London: Cassell, 1999. Idem, 'Does God Requite in History? Comments on a Theme in World Christianity,' *Studies in World Christianity*, 4/1 1998, 65-83.

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