

# The Discerner

the voice of... **Religion Analysis Service**

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING  
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 30, Number 1

January • February • March 2010

Eckankar  
Confucianism

Hare Krishna

Freemasons

Jehovah's Witnesses

Humanism

Jainism

Judaism

Neopaganism

MOONIES

Univeralism

Wicca

Islam

Hinduism  
**Exposed!**

MORMONS

BAHA'I FAITH

Buddhism

Scientology

Satanism

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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth  
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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# **OFFICE NOTES**

## **THANK YOU**

We praise God and His people for the many encouragements these past months. Your prayers, new and renewed subscriptions, and extra gifts have made it possible to supply some 20 churches gratis. Some subscriptions result from this initiative, but, for the most part, they are used for youth and adult ministries. We are glad that we can help churches in this way.

## **CORRECTION**

Our last issue (October – December 2009) was mistakenly indexed as Volume 30, Number 1. Please correct to Volume 29, Number 4. Thank you!

## **QUESTIONS?**

Routinely we receive requests for information on cults and movements. We are pleased to answer your questions if we can. Recent questions had to do with Messianic Churches, Old Shepherd Lodge, and Coonyites. Articles from The Discerner in the years 1987-2007 are now available through our website: [www.ras.org](http://www.ras.org).

The RAS Team

## DEAR READER

It is heart-wrenching and soul-searching when a new cult originates in our own “backyard.” With this issue, we focus on Eckankar, which originated in Chanhassen, Minnesota, a city only about 50 miles away from where we live. We ask ourselves, how could this happen here? There are countless Christian churches in the area. Aren’t they meeting the spiritual needs of desperate, inquiring, and seeking souls? Personally we as a family are affected by Eckankar. We have good friends whose loved ones are involved in this cult.

With this issue RAS researcher Steve Lagoon has extensively and reflectively analyzed Eckankar, its origin, teachings, practices, and how it compares with true Christianity. We are including the full text of his manuscript. We want to give you a very complete, adequate, and available picture of this cult for your immediate use. Lagoon’s prolific footnotes complement his keen diagnosis and evaluation and are available upon request.

We ask ourselves again: Why are these strange Southeast Asian cults (sometimes termed Youth Cults which include Scientology, Hare Krishna, Transcendental Meditation, New Age, Eckankar) so appealing to Americans and, in fact, to Western Europeans as well? Several reasons come to mind:

1. Modern media exposure to Eastern philosophies and religions that underpin and glorify exotic and esoteric orientations. Books, travel, and wars have also augmented these contacts.
2. American and Western penchants to fads, thrills, experimentation, and the acceptance of titillating concepts. Concepts such as cosmic consciousness, human potential, reincarnation, karma, and “godhood” are quite foreign to the average Westerner.
3. Abysmal lack of teaching in our churches, schools, and society about deviant, false, pernicious ideologies and practices.
4. Syncretistic, egalitarian ideas that evaluate cults and religions as equal and, according to the individual, valid.
5. The immigration of millions of Southeast Asians who bring their religions and ideologies with them.

On the heels of his insightful study on “Visions and Dreams” in our previous edition, Dr. Roy Knuteson brings us a treatment on “Signs, Wonders, and Miracles”. These biblically-referenced articles have had a warm resonance among readers, pastors, and Bible teachers.

Do you know who they are when you see them? The quiz on “attire” should quicken us to be more observant and, yes, “discerning.”

**Laurence J. Sutherland**

# ECKANKAR: A NIGHTMARE FOR THE SOUL

Perhaps you have heard of the religion called Eckankar, but have only a vague idea of what it really is. This article is for you. I intend to show that, although Eckankar's adherents promote it as the answer to all of your spiritual dreams, it is, in fact, a nightmare for the soul, a satanic deception leading its followers to disillusionment and hell.

Since the headquarters of Eckankar (Chanhassen, Minnesota) are so close to the headquarters of Religion Analysis Service (Minneapolis, Minnesota), we have received many inquiries through the years about Eckankar. We have encountered members of Eckankar promoting their false teachings in local libraries and other public venues.

Some are drawn to Eckankar by its promise to teach adherents how to interpret their dreams. Others may have viewed the teachings of Harold Klemp (leader of Eckankar) on cable television broadcasts. Others have been turned off by traditional or orthodox Christianity and are looking for something new and exciting, something that tickles the ears.

At the outset, it must be made clear that Eckankar does not claim to be, nor is it in any way, a Christian religion or denomination, nor is it compatible with Christianity. In fact, its teachings are antithetical to Christ Jesus, His word, and are a danger to everyman.

## **Brief History**

Eckankar was founded in 1965 by Paul Twitchell (1908-1971), "a journalist and former staff member of the Church of Scientology."<sup>1</sup> Since he was both a researcher and writer, it is not surprising that Twitchell once made the statement, "Man will take to religion, even if he has to invent one."<sup>2</sup> And so he did! Barrett offers more background on Eckankar's founder:

Before founding Eckankar, Twitchell was, from 1950 to 1955, a member of the Self-Revelation Church of Absolute Monism, a Hindu movement led by Swami Premananda. He was apparently required to leave the Church because of misconduct, and in 1955 he joined Scientology, becoming one of the very first to go Clear. Also in 1955 he joined Ruhani Satsang, a Sant

Mat movement founded by Kirpal Singh... but... fell out with Kirpal and they [Twitchell and wife Gail] left the movement [in 1963]... Twitchell founded Eckankar in the USA in 1965, at the same time declaring himself to be the 971<sup>st</sup> in an unbroken line of Living ECK Masters stretching back many thousands of years. His lectures and books... publicized the new movement, which grew rapidly. It was registered as a non-profit religious organization in 1970.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that Twitchell was involved with a lot of religions before he decided to become a religious entrepreneur and create Eckankar.<sup>4</sup> Lewis reports: “Soon after Twitchell established Eckankar, he moved its headquarters to Las Vegas, Nevada. He wrote several of the movement’s key books, including *Eckankar: The Key to Secret Worlds* (1969) which served as an introductory text for many years.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Leadership of Darwin Gross**

Ruth Tucker provides details about the change in leadership of Eckankar following Twitchell’s death:

After Twitchell’s death, Darwin Gross ‘received the rod of power and was acknowledged as the 972 ECK Master... He authored several books and the movement acquired new headquarters in Menlo Park, California, and more than doubled in size. Nevertheless, his tenure was controversial, in part because of his marriage to and subsequent divorce of Gail Twitchell, his predecessor’s widow... He later was ‘officially cut off from the ECKANKAR organization... He was succeeded by Harold Klemm as ECK Master.’<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, the transition from the leadership of Paul Twitchell to Darwin Gross was very troubling, and should raise problems for anyone interested in truth. Albrecht, Alexander & Nichols provide the alarming details:

As the sixties ended, Twitchell faced a problem. According to his earlier teaching, his anointing as Mahanta would expire on October 22, 1970. But Twitchell did not want to give up his exalted position. At the Fourth World-Wide Seminar held in Las Vegas on October 22, 1970... he reluctantly explained that those who had been training for the mastership had failed their test... Twitchell would continue as Mahanta for at least another five years. Not all Eckankar adherents accepted Twitchell’s explanation. In January 1971 he tried to silence complaints by explaining that the next Mahanta was still only a child who

would not be revealed for at least another fifteen years... In a May 1971 letter to his followers, Twitchell warned that anyone claiming to be the Mahanta without his approval and before the end of the fifteen-year training period would be a deceiver. But before the end of the year, Twitchell died of a heart attack. Five weeks after his death Eckankar had a new Mahanta. At the Fifth World-Wide Seminar of Eckankar, Gail Atkinson Twitchell announced the new Mahanta was Darwin Gross... Was Gross then a deceiver? Twitchell's widow evidently did not think so. She said that Twitchell had come to her in a dream and revealed his successor. On October 27, 1972, Gail Twitchell married Gross, who described himself as 'the only man ever manifested in all history in whom individualism and universalism are combined in the full expression'. Five years later they were divorced.<sup>7</sup>

Several questions are raised by these turns of events. For instance, why should anyone trust their eternal soul to someone like Twitchell, who though claiming to be an ECK Master, the living Mahanta, did not know that he was going to die and needed to turn leadership over to a successor. A prophet he was not!

Again, if Twitchell was correct, there should not have been a successor to Twitchell until the fifteen years had passed in 1985. Indeed, both Gross and Klemp were adults at the time Twitchell said his successor was just a child. Therefore, according to Twitchell's own words, both Darwin Gross and Harold Klemp are "deceivers". Further, it was surely a convenient revelation that Paul Twitchell came to his widow Gail in a dream to appoint her next husband as his successor. One wonders why Twitchell would appoint as his successor someone who would later be cast out of Eckankar. A prophet he was not! In light of the above, why should anyone look to these men to as their spiritual guides?

Whatever the circumstances, Darwin Gross did succeed Twitchell. However, despite having been the leader of Eckankar for a decade, Darwin Gross was not only removed from all leadership positions within Eckankar, but by 1984, even "his books on Eckankar were banished from the movement."<sup>8</sup> The successor to Darwin Gross and current leader of Eckankar is Harold Klemp.

### **Leadership of Harold Klemp**

Klemp, or Sri Harold Klemp as he is called by his followers, now 68 years old (in 2010), was a "Wisconsin farm boy and one-time Lutheran ministerial student who in 1981 became Eckankar's spiritual leader."<sup>9</sup> We are also told that Klemp "attended divinity school, and

completed four years in the U.S. Air Force. While stationed in Japan, he discovered ECKANKAR [and was] initiated by Paul Twitchell in 1969.”<sup>10</sup> Lewis states:

Klemp felt led to move Eckankar’s headquarters to Chanhassen, near Minneapolis, Minnesota, where the Temple of Eck was erected. The Temple opened its doors in 1990. Under Klemp’s leadership, Eckankar has grown steadily. Eckankar publications are now authored primarily by Klemp, though Twitchell’s writings are still published by the organization.<sup>11</sup>

Klemp also claims the title of “a modern-day prophet,”<sup>12</sup> “Where can we find someone who has already traveled the road to God – and come back to tell about it? Harold Klemp is one such person. He is a modern-day prophet.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Brief Overview of Eckankar Beliefs**

Maja Beckstrom sums up the beliefs of Eckankar in a nutshell: “It blends Eastern concepts such as karma and reincarnation with dream interpretation and reliance on a living master who guides followers on their spiritual paths.”<sup>14</sup> Lewis offers a more detailed overview:

Eckankar’s basic cosmology and meditation techniques are closely related to the Sant Mat tradition, a north Indian spiritual lineage. The notion that God’s Voice is light and sound is a core doctrine of this tradition. Rather like Western Gnosticism, the cosmos is pictured as a multi-level emanation in which human souls are trapped by passions and illusions, and the spiritual devotee needs to move through these levels and return to the divine source. A ‘sound current’ (a ‘river of vibration’, alternatively pictured as a ray of light) from the higher levels – an emanation from the high God – flows down through all of the lower levels. A living master – referred to in Eckankar as the Mahanta or the Eck Master – links the devotee to this current at the time of initiation. Contemplating the sound current and the inner light... with the Master’s guidance allows the individual to follow the sound back to the source from which it emanated (the Supreme Being), resulting in spiritual liberation.<sup>15</sup>

Experts on the movement describe it as a syncretistic religion in which its founder, Paul Twitchell, blended ideas from many sources in arriving at his new creation of Eckankar. For instance, David Lane, of Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, California says, “Twitchell created Eckankar out of a blend of Scientology, Theosophy

and the Radhasoami movement, an offshoot of Sikhism.”<sup>16</sup> Eckankar literature agrees: “He [Twitchell] explored a wide range of spiritual traditions under different teachers. The high teachings of ECK had been scattered to the four corners of the world. Paul [Twitchell] gathered these golden teachings... and made them available to us.”<sup>17</sup>

Clearly, Twitchell gathered into one system ideas from many different religious systems to form Eckankar. Harold Klemp gives an official explanation of the basic ideas of Eckankar:

The teachings of ECK define the nature of the Soul. You are Soul, a particle of God sent into the worlds (including earth) to gain spiritual experience. The goal of Eck is spiritual freedom in this lifetime, after which you become a Co-worker with God, both here and in the next world. Karma and reincarnation are primary beliefs. Key to the ECK teachings is the Mahanta, the Living ECK Master. He has the special ability to act as both the Inner and Outer Master for Eck students. He is the prophet of Eckankar, given respect but not worship. He teaches the sacred name of God, HU, which lifts you spiritually into the Light and Sound of God, the ECK (Holy Spirit). Purified by the practice of the Spiritual Exercises of ECK, you are then able to accept the full love of God in this lifetime. Sri Harold Klemp is the Mahanta, the Living Eck Master.<sup>18</sup>

The goal of Eckankar, then, is to help initiates (chela) learn how to connect to spiritual guides (mainly the living ECK Master) that will help them move through various spheres of existence until they finally ascend to the Sugmad or “god.”

### **Key Teachings of Eckankar**

As we have seen, one of the keys to understanding Eckankar is to understand the role of the “living ECK Master” or “Mahanta.” My personal experience with Eckists has revealed the enormous reverence they have toward the Mahanta, currently Harold Klemp. Though Eckankar specifically denies that the Mahanta or Living Eck Master is worshipped, the actual practice of Eckists cannot fall far short.

When one considers the place of importance of the Mahanta in the teachings of Eckankar, his semi-worship is explained. For instance, we are told concerning the Mahanta: “He becomes the actual manifestation of God through this power, which he retains throughout his life here on earth... they are saviors of the human race.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, “Each living ECK Master has become the Mahanta,



which is God made flesh on Earth. Therefore, we look to the Mahanta for he is the representative of the Sugmad in our midst today.”<sup>20</sup>

Eckists believe that the Mahanta is working behind the scenes in ways that the world simply does not understand. For instance, Paul Twitchell made the following claim while he was the supposed Mahanta in 1971: “Sometimes people criticize the Master for not presenting visible proof of what he is doing, but they are not aware that he often halts destructive earthquakes, disasters which would upset the world population. But he never takes credit nor shows outwardly that it was his efforts that saved perhaps millions of lives.”<sup>21</sup>

Most important of all, the Eck Master is said to be the key to salvation. For instance, Twitchell stated that, “There is proof that the orthodox religions are not doing much for mankind. Man’s great problem is that he has not turned to the ECK Masters to receive spiritual redemption.”<sup>22</sup> Twitchell also claimed: “Without the Master no Soul can find his way out of the circle of births and deaths.”<sup>23</sup> Again, he stated: “Then who shall see heaven? Only those who accept God in their life, those who follow the Mahanta and seek Reality through the path of ECKANKAR.”<sup>24</sup>

So, according to Eckankar, one’s very soul and spiritual well-being is based upon following Harold Klemp of Minnesota. Jesus Christ walked on water and did many other miracles giving us a reason to believe Him when He claimed that He was “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). The only water Harold Klemp ever walked upon might be a frozen Minnesota lake in the wintertime.

### **The Danger of Rejecting the Eck Master**

Indeed, there is alleged to be grave danger in rejecting the guidance of the Eck Master as the following Eckankar passage shows:

One can neither sell nor betray the living Master, for he is a channel of the holy ECK. The slightest act against him returns swiftly to the doer... They likewise do not understand the troubles that befall them as a consequence of their overt and covert attempts to belittle or ridicule the teachings of the blessed ECK. For some reason, they believe that they are above such things simply because they have read a few books or studied under certain teachers... Even the most simple lies will bring about a quick result which is not of a pleasant nature. One does not realize what these small acts might be, but on closer scrutiny we find that they are such minor things as belittling the Master’s words: arguing with him over some point;

the posing of needless questions; smoking in his presence; being doubtful of any promise that he makes... turning against him and refusing to act in accordance with his desires... These are some of the things that create a negative attitude towards the living Master.<sup>25</sup>

It is most interesting that such claims of dire consequences are made in Eckankar literature while at the same time they claim that they don't use fear tactics as they allege Christians do. One Eckankar source stated, "The teachings [of Eckankar] are written to speak to the inner being, Soul. *They don't play off the emotions or the fears of spiritual seekers.*"<sup>26</sup>

Despite such denials, *there are ample examples in Eckankar literature of fear being used in an attempt to retain and control members.* For example, Harold Klemp stated, "I strongly encourage you to continue with the Spiritual Exercises of ECK... When you stop... you lose the ability to know instinctively what you should do to run your life in the best way."<sup>27</sup>

### **Watch Out for the Eck Boogey-Men**

If there wasn't enough to worry about for the Eckists, the Eckmasters have created a boogey-man to keep wavering Eckists in line which can be described as attacks by enemy egos or personalities. Twitchell warned of these boogey-men as follows:

These other egos become guests in the individual's world and often create problems... because Soul, while encased in the body, gets too blind in the physical world to do much about them... It is a principle of ECK to break up these beings in the chela and allow him to be himself. None of the swarm of personalities have any further power over him once he steps into the world of ECK... The chela must at all times be faithful to the cause of ECK. If he is not, then he is defeating himself and is left without defense against the swarm of entities within him."<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, if a student of Eckankar is not quite ready to let go of their old faith, say Christianity, they are told of the sure attack of these entities: "The swarm of entities we have been speaking about refuse to let go. They will fight desperately to the last ounce of strength to hold on to their channel into this world."<sup>29</sup> One can easily see how an Eckist would have fear of leaving Eckankar.

## **Blind Loyalty to Eck Leader**

Like many cults, students of Eckankar are taught to trust their leaders rather than their own reason. Yes, the Eckist is taught to leave the thinking to the leadership and to fear his own understanding of things. For instance Twitchell said: “The mind will play a thousand tricks upon the chela. It is unreliable and habitually beset by its own thought creations, harassed by its own desires and dominated by its own passions. The ECK Master offers a perfect safeguard against the disasters the chela encounters when following the dictates of the mental powers.”<sup>30</sup>

The Eckist is further warned: “As followers of ECK we must go beyond all things of the lower worlds, which includes mind.”<sup>31</sup> Harold Klemp alike warns of the dangers of human reasoning: “It’s the ECK or the Mahanta trying to guide you through life... you will be led in a better direction than the highest degree of reasoning could ever hope to steer you.”<sup>32</sup>

This warning concerning human reasoning is extended to literature as well. Don’t read silly books, just trust the Eck Master: “Frankly, there is great danger in undergoing instructions from books bought on open shelves or taken from any school or city library. It is an area of consciousness not to be tampered with, unless one is under the guidance of a competent master. The only guides whom I know to be capable... are the ECK Masters.”<sup>33</sup>

The preceding should make clear the kind of manipulation and phobia indoctrination that occurs within Eckankar.

## **Soul Travel**

The second key to understanding Eckankar is to understand its claims concerning soul travel. Eckankar teaches that while in dreams or meditative states, a person’s soul actually leaves the body and travels to other planes of existence. Eckankar teaches that these soul travels are led by the Mahanta or living Eck Master or other spirit guides. For instance, Twitchell spoke of Mantras: “Repetition of words and phrases from sacred scriptures is good, for it opens the consciousness and allows the ECK to flow through”<sup>34</sup> Surely this stands in stark contrast to the words of Jesus, “And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans” (Matthew 6:7).

On the surface, Eckankar’s emphasis on dreams may seem harmless. But there is grave danger in opening one’s self up to spiritual forces. We should always remember the words of the Bible, “And no wonder,

for Satan masquerades as an angel of light.” It is not surprising then, if “his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Those exploring Eckankar should therefore be warned that the techniques used for soul travel expose the Eck initiate to satanic and demonic forces. I cringe when I read Eckankar statements imploring the Eckists to open themselves to spirit guides. For instance, Eckists are told: “Here is an exercise to open the heart for dream instruction. Before you go to sleep, you can say this to Spirit, or the spiritual guide you look to: ‘I give you permission to take me into the Far Country.’”<sup>35</sup>

Current Eck Master Harold Klemp makes the same suggestion: “If one wants to be a Co-worker with God, one must also have an open state of consciousness. One must be open to the Inner Master, the Mahanta, or to whoever your Inner Master is.”<sup>36</sup> Klemp also said, “If you are interested in Soul Travel, you can try a technique tonight in the dream state. Close your eyes, and place your attention very gently on the Spiritual Eye. Then chant HU... Then look inwardly for the individual who is your ideal at this time... say, ‘I give you permission to take me to the place that I have earned, for my greatest spiritual unfoldment’... know that the individual who comes to meet you is a dear friend.”<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, the Bible warns: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). In fact, Eckankar teaches Eckists to make communication with the dead, something that is clearly prohibited in the Bible: “Let no one be found among you that... consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD” (Deuteronomy 18:11-12). Again, Klemp claims: “Every so often the past Masters will come to you and give you knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Since he left the physical body... Paul Twitchell, continues to work on the inner planes... I saw Paul some weeks ago.”<sup>38</sup>

Yes, Klemp claimed to see Twitchell in 1985 though Twitchell had been dead since 1971. While Klemp advocates communicating with deceased past masters, the Bible strictly warns against it, “Why consult the dead on the behalf of the living. If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn” (Isaiah 8:19-20). The apostle warned Christians to ignore messages contrary to the revealed truth of the gospel, even if that “truth” was from an angelic appearance (Galatians 1:8-9).

## **Eckankar, Karma, and Reincarnation**

Another important key in understanding Eckankar is to understand the major role eastern beliefs in karma and reincarnation play in the religion. But first, we must take a step back to the *Eckankar creation and fall story* to understand the big picture. Eckankar teaches that man existed with “god” in a paradise-like state (as a soul), but in such a state, man was not able to learn important lessons, and hence “god” needed to send them to earth, to take on human bodies, and eventually through the lessons of Eckankar and guidance from an Eck Master, make it back to “god.” What stands out like a sore thumb is how hard Eckankar tries to avoid the ideas of sin and guilt, yet retain the ideas of a fall and negative karma. It takes a great deal of mental gymnastics to explain man’s fall from “god” while denying that man has sinned, to see how someone can acquire negative karma without having guilt.

For instance, one Eckankar booklet stated that, “ECKANKAR teaches that Soul is a happy being. It is not guilty of anything.”<sup>39</sup> Klemp reiterated the point, “In ECK we acknowledge neither sin nor the guilt that goes with it.”<sup>40</sup> Paul Twitchell agreed, “ECKANKAR is the ancient gospel which does not teach there is original sin as most orthodox religions claim.”<sup>41</sup> If there is no sin nor guilt in Eckankar theology, then it follows that Eckankar also denies man’s lost state: “Soul is not lost. This may come as a shock to the orthodox Christian mind.”<sup>42</sup>

Despite denying that man is guilty of sin and is lost, Eckankar has its own version of a sin and fall account:

In the spiritual worlds, the SUGMAD saw that Soul was just resting, having a good time, serving nothing but Itself... Now the SUGMAD had a rope – we’ll call it the rope of karma – which was attached to a trapdoor at the floor of the spiritual worlds. This trapdoor emptied out into the lower worlds...all these individual Souls came tumbling down... into the worlds of darkness, screaming and crying and carrying on.<sup>43</sup>

Regarding this account of man’s fall Klemp adds:

Each of us is Soul. Once we laughed and sang in the high heavens of God’s pure Light and Sound – at play in the park. But without the discipline or need to serve others, we (Soul) served ourselves. So God sent us to earth for the rich experience of living in a world of duality... It was all to learn the true nature of love.<sup>44</sup>

No matter the semantic games played by Klemp, his own account shows that man is guilty of sin, at least the sin of selfishness, and is now lost because of it. In fact, there is no real difference between being guilty of sin and acquiring negative karma. And just as after the fall in the biblical account, man was in need of a savior to rescue him from the darkness, so Eckankar teaches that man is trapped on earth in darkness, and in need of an Eck Master to show him how to get in touch with “god” and ascend to the heavens.

One major difference is that in Eckankar, one must work off their own negative karma in order to reach the heavens, whereas in Christianity, Christ has already paid the price for our salvation; He has wiped away our negative karma with His precious blood. Eckankar states that it will, “Explain how to *earn one’s way* past all karmic burdens and enter into heaven in this lifetime.”<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, the Bible asserts: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not of your selves, it is the gift of God – not by works” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

## **Reincarnation**

It will be helpful to examine exactly what Eckankar teaches concerning reincarnation (transmigration of the soul). Klemp is convinced that eventually even Christians will accept reincarnation, “Many people today still find it hard to accept the fact of reincarnation... In time, the Christian doctrines will also be able to accept and incorporate... reincarnation”<sup>46</sup> Klemp makes this audacious claim despite the fact that reincarnation, as we shall see, is completely incompatible with the message of Scripture.

Twitchell explains how he feels reincarnation works:

This is how Karma operates with each soul that inhabits a body on Earth. It must experience whatever is possible within that one embodiment, then pass on to another, and eventually go through whatever human situation is possible for each incarnation. We could never experience all situations within one lifetime, so arrangements were made for Soul to have many incarnations – sometimes millions of them – in order to learn as much as possible about this world. When it is finished, it becomes purified.<sup>47</sup>

Twitchell adds: “The SUGMAD established the lower finished worlds, for the purpose of providing a training ground for soul... Eventually, after many incarnations, Soul is purified by its experience and returns to heaven.”<sup>48</sup> But what evidence is there that man can be

perfected after many lives when he does not come near perfection in one life? As we contemplate, do we know anyone who is perfect, or even close to it?

This process of reincarnation, according to Eckankar, is not restricted to human life alone but: “The universality of the law of karma is one of the chief factors which binds life together, and not only human life, but animal, plant, and mineral life as well. All these compose one big family with a complicated and inseparable history and an inseparable karma.”<sup>49</sup>

Indeed, not only are animals, plants, and minerals said to be a part of the earthly family connected by reincarnation, but: “There are various degrees of consciousness, although the knowingness of it is the same. For example, the consciousness of a stone is certainly different from the consciousness of man.”<sup>50</sup>

Earlier in this article, it was shown that Eckankar leaders warn their followers of the dangers of using their minds rather than just trusting the leaders. Surely, this must be one of those times, because my mind cannot understand how a rock or tree can build up either positive or negative karma. How does a rock sin? How does a tree do good?

Eckankar teaches that when we suffer, we are merely working off our negative karma: “He also has to recognize that many of the conditions in his life are the result of his karma: he must stop his self-sympathy and resentment of them.”<sup>51</sup> Not only is this said to be true for ourselves, but it is also said to be true for others. So when you see someone suffering, and have a desire to help them, DON’T, because, “When you take away a person’s symptoms, you actually deprive him of the opportunity to learn what he needs to know in order to avoid the karmic patterns that caused the illness. He is just going to keep on doing the same things over again.”<sup>52</sup>

This is a clear example of what the Bible warns about when it says; “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter”(Isaiah 5:20). The idea that all those who espouse karma and reincarnation is that if some poor soul is lying in the gutter suffering in some way, that we should not help them. They are merely learning their lesson, merely paying their karmic debt. In fact, if you try to help them, you are hurting them, because once you have helped them they will not learn the lesson they supposedly needed to learn; they will simply have to suffer again sometime later.

This is why hospitals were practically non-existent in Hindu countries before the influence of Christian ideas. All this can be contrasted to the teachings of the Bible concerning the poor and needy. Jesus Himself in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) taught the importance of caring for those suffering. On the other hand, advocates of reincarnation, such as Eckists, would be duty bound by their belief to walk right on by the injured man. They would be exactly like those religionists that Jesus condemns in the parable.

One of the most significant problems advocates of reincarnation face is the problem of how we are supposed to learn from past lives if we simply cannot remember them? Twitchell acknowledged the problem: “God seems to draw a curtain down on our knowledge of past lives and only lets us remember what has taken place in the particular one we are living.”<sup>53</sup>

Sometimes, examples are given that seem to suggest that past lives memories are possible such as the amazing abilities of child prodigies playing musical instruments or knowing foreign languages they allegedly had not been exposed to.

But Eckankar teachers make an end run around the problem by claiming that Eckists can learn about past lives’ experiences while soul traveling. Twitchell said, “Memory and recall of past lives belong to the causal plane.”<sup>54</sup> While in the state of soul travel, the Eck Masters can take you to planes of existence where one can learn from their past lives experiences. But we have only their word for such claims. We have seen that soul travel is an open path to demonic involvement and deception. I can hear the laughs of demonic forces as Eckists are deceived into believing the “doctrines of demons.”

Earlier, we touched upon the Eckankar notion that souls have to pay their karmic debt to advance to find their way back to “god.” Twitchell taught: “The human race must take on its own responsibility for its debt, and work it out. This will be possible in approximately thirteen million years, at which time the Earth will come to an end in this universe.”<sup>55</sup>

Apparently, Twitchell was referring to the sum total of the world population, for individually Eckankar seems to promise the ability of working off all karmic debt within their present lifetime. Indeed, Klemp tells us: “After two to five years in ECK, much of the karma has begun to work off.”<sup>56</sup>

In order to facilitate the need to burn off negative karma, Eckankar has invented the cave of purification. Just go to sleep, invite “spirit



guides” like the Eck Master to take your soul traveling to a cave where you can get some microwave spirituality. In his book Harold Klemp relates: “Cave of Purification... I’ve heard about a place in the inner worlds where people go to burn off karma. It’s called the cave of purification. What exactly is it? Is it real? This is an actual location on a number of planes. Its purpose is to provide a place for a rapid burn-off of karma.”<sup>57</sup>

One can see how a promise like this will keep Eckists in the religion hoping that Klemp will take them to this cave in the hopes of fast forwarding their ability to pay their karmic debt. This all stands in stark contrast to the biblical witness that Jesus Christ has already paid for our sins on the cross of Calvary. The good news is that lost sinners do not have to pay the debt of their sin and rebellion against God because “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but everlasting life” (John 3:16).

We should not believe the lie that we will be reincarnated, for the Bible declares that: “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

## **Comparison of Eckankar and Christianity**

Christians believe in the God of the Bible. Eckankar, however, believes in a “god” whom they call the Sugmad. Eckists refer to the Sugmad with the pronoun ‘it’ since its’ “god” is “neither masculine nor feminine.”<sup>58</sup> Their definition of the Sugmad (god) is contradictory in that ‘it’ is said to be “impersonal, infinite, the Ocean of Love and Mercy.”<sup>59</sup> With this definition, the question arises as to how an ‘impersonal’ being, or force, can have love or mercy since these are attributes of a being with personal existence?

Christians believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, which states that within the nature of the one God, there are three eternal and distinct persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. However, Eckankar desecrates the biblical Trinity with its own so-called trinity: “The Sugmad, the ECK, and the Mahanta...the Trinity of ECKANKAR.”<sup>60</sup>

## **Jehovah God?**

Eckankar has further blasphemies against the biblical God claiming: “Jehovah, the angry God of the Old Testament, is an entirely different being from the loving God of the New Testament. The Christian is taught that they are one and the same God, but their characteristics are completely different.”<sup>61</sup> Klemp also said, “Jehovah, whom we

know in ECKANKAR as Jot Niranjana, is the lord of the heaven immediately above the earth plane—not a very high one at all.”<sup>62</sup> He stated further: “Jehovah is only one of the lower lords, incidentally; a servant of the SUGMAD, the highest God.”<sup>63</sup> Klemp completes his assault on the biblical God by attacking His attributes:

Too many are willing to follow Jehovah with blind faith. They completely miss the fallacy behind some of the Biblical stories, such as the sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham...The fallacy in the story is this. God, supposedly being omniscient, all-powerful, and all knowing, surely should have known that Abraham was faithful...God does know, doesn't He? Maybe the highest God knows, but some of the lower gods don't know [i.e. Jehovah].<sup>64</sup>

## Jesus

Jesus is treated very carefully by Eckankar. This may simply come from a desire to avoid offending so many in our culture who still revere Him. Just the same, Eckankar claims that Jesus had studied Eck principles before starting His ministry, “Jesus left the ECK group, with whom he studied for some time... The ECK Master gave Jesus the basic fundamentals of ECKANKAR, who used them in His own teachings. Out of His knowledge of ECK came what we know today as Christianity.”<sup>65</sup> This comment is both preposterous and a fairytale. The teachings of Christianity have almost no affinity with those of Eckankar, and Eckankar existed in the first century only in the fantasies of Eckankar leaders.

Eckankar holds Jesus on the same level as founders of other world religions, rather than accepting that He is the unique Son of God. It further denies His continuing bodily existence. For instance, “These are Jesus Christ, Buddha, Mahavira, Zoroaster and Mohammed... these leaders have gone out of the body now.”<sup>66</sup> The denial of Jesus' bodily existence (and by extension, His bodily return to earth at His second coming), is in line with Eckankar's low view of the human body, and its further denial of the bodily resurrection: “So we are not looking for life eternal in the physical body, or the resurrection of a body which has died... Salvation isn't for the physical body.”<sup>67</sup> The Bible clearly teaches the resurrection of the body; Jesus' resurrection sets the pattern for the resurrection of all Christians.

Finally, Eckankar teaches: “Christ made an unnecessary sacrifice for his people.”<sup>68</sup> To the contrary, the Bible affirms Christ sacrifice and resurrection are the very heart and soul of Christianity and the very basis of salvation. The apostle Paul stated: “By this gospel you are

saved... That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:2-4).

## **Scriptures**

Eckankar does not accept the authority of the Christian Bible, believing it to be corrupt. Instead, Eckists have their own scriptures which they call Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad. One Eckankar source describes them thusly:

Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad means ‘Way of the Eternal.’ These are the ancient scriptures of Eckankar, which offer the basic truths of Soul Travel and total consciousness. The original text of these volumes can be found in the Temples of Golden Wisdom on the invisible planes. There are more than twelve books in the inner worlds; these first two sections (Book One and Two) were recorded by Paul Twitchell for modern seekers.<sup>69</sup>

It seems strange that God did not provide the full text of the Eckankar scriptures for the Eckist on earth, and can only be found while traveling the invisible planes!

## **The Relationship of Eckankar and Christianity**

Eckankar teaches that Christianity was true for its time, but that its time has come and gone. Those who want to advance spiritually today need to move beyond the teachings of Christianity and accept Eckankar. This attitude comes across in Harold Klemp’s personal testimony after leaving the Christian church of his youth; “One family back home made it a cause to pray for me to come back to the church. I didn’t want to go back to the church. They might as well have been praying for a fourth grader to go back and be a first grade pupil again.”<sup>70</sup> To Klemp, the Christian faith of his youth is simply “dead orthodox teachings.”<sup>71</sup> It is interesting that Eckankar takes such a dim view of Christian teachings since they claim: “The famous line of prophets in the Israelite tribes were trained in the work of ECKANKAR, as their prophecies well show,”<sup>72</sup> that “Moses... and Jesus, are known to have been chelas in the various mystery schools... which are all offsprings of the ancient order of ECKANKAR Masters, known most commonly as the Order of the Vairagi Avatars,”<sup>73</sup> and that even the apostle Paul was an Eck Master.<sup>74</sup>

Eckankar claims that, “Most people who have come into ECKANKAR have done so because their questions about life were not being answered by orthodox and traditional teachings.”<sup>75</sup> Again, for

spiritual advancement, Christians need to understand that God has moved on from the base teaching of Christianity and we need to get with the program and join Eckankar. Twitchell put it this way, “This is when the chela must either break with his traditional religious past and accept ECK as the only force of divine nature, or stay at a standstill in his spiritual growth.”<sup>76</sup> Again: “Each religion serves its purpose in its own time and day, each must eventually give way to something more complete as mankind advances.”<sup>77</sup> One naturally wonders when Eckankar’s time will come to step aside!

## **Many Paths to God?**

Eckankar avoids claiming to be the only path to God. It suggests that each religion has its value, but Eckankar is taught to be the most direct and complete way to spiritual advancement. Klemp avows: “There are many ways to reach the kingdom of heaven”<sup>78</sup> Yes, other religions have served a purpose, but none of them can take people to their “true home” in the heavens: “These incarnations are known to us as the saviours. Many of them, like Jesus, Krishna and Zoroaster, have been the founders of world religions. Yet none of them are able to take us into our true home with the Supreme Deity”<sup>79</sup>

In reality, the bottom line that can’t be missed is that all other religions pale in significance and spiritual power to Eckankar as the following quotes make crystal clear:

“ECKANKAR is the only current of life, and it alone carries the full conception of truth.”<sup>80</sup>

“All these things can be learned through the medium of ECKANKAR, the only and universal path to God... It... is the All-Embracing and universal path to God.”<sup>81</sup>

“It is only when one has entered into the ECK and become the instrument of God that he knows about Truth.”<sup>82</sup>

“Only by the use of ECK can we take the straight road to this absolute kingdom. All other practices leave us in the lower worlds.”<sup>83</sup>

“The very key to the spiritual worlds is placed in our hands and we open the door to enter them. There is no other way except through the ECK Master, who places the key in our hands.”<sup>84</sup>

“Unless Soul takes the path of ECK there is no salvation or liberation for It. All other paths lead only to the top of the three worlds...where sits the throne of Kal Niranjana. There the individual ends up serving this entity instead of God.”<sup>85</sup>

Given the Eckankar claims to truth, and given its claim that Christianity is a dead religion, it further claims that it doesn't want to convert people ring hollow. For instance, Peter Skelskey, a spokesman for Eckankar declares: "Our mission is not to convert people."<sup>86</sup> Another Eckankar source states: "There is no desire to convert people to ECKANKAR. Though many Eckists share their spiritual enthusiasm with others, there is an abiding respect for the belief systems of all people."<sup>87</sup>

Christians should be forewarned. Eckankar believes that Christianity is "so yesterday," and that to really advance spiritually one must be in Eckankar. It is not simply an interesting place to learn about dreams, but a demonic deception that draws many of its "converts" from the folds of Christian churches as is the case of its current leader, Harold Klemp.

### **How to Decide Which Path to Follow?**

Since Eckankar makes grand claims for its importance for mankind's spiritual journey, how do we decide if they are correct? Eckankar addresses this question and suggests a rather subjective test to determine religious truth: "The trick is the discrimination that you need: to tell what's good for you and what's not good for you. This comes by listening to your heart."<sup>88</sup> Klemp adds: "In ECK, we don't look for explanations; we look for experience and realization."<sup>89</sup>

Are we to just believe whatever feels good or right? Can every religion really be true despite the fact that their beliefs are contradictory? For instance, Eckankar claims that Jehovah, the God of the Bible is not almighty God, while the Bible says that He is. Can they both be true? Eckankar claims that we gain salvation by working off our negative karma whereas the Bible teaches that salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ who paid for our sins on the cross. Can they both be true? No, they cannot. We must choose.

Paul Twitchell is dead and gone. Harold Klemp will follow Twitchell to the grave. Jesus Christ rose from the grave victorious. As for me and my house we will follow the risen Lord Jesus!

### **Steve Lagoon**

*The extensive bibliography of 89 notations can be obtained upon request.*



# **“SIGNS, WONDERS, AND MIRACLES”**

by Roy E. Knuteson Ph.D.

The words emblazoned across the side of the large semi-truck read:

**“SIGNS, WONDERS, MIRACLES”**

**“THE LAME WALK, THE BLIND SEE, THE DEAF HEAR”**

**COME EXPECTING A MIRACLE**

I walked into the huge tent and what I saw was truly amazing. The atmosphere was electrifying. I saw people throw away their crutches and run across the platform. Some threw away their glasses. Demons were exorcised. Some people simply collapsed on the floor. Before the evening was over the Evangelist had so mesmerized his audience that he had them convinced that Jesus, in spirit form, had actually walked into the tent accompanied by angels. When asked how many could see the Lord and the angels moving up and down the aisles, a large majority raised their hands. A.A. Allen – “God’s Man of Faith and Power” had come to Dallas for another of his sensational healing meetings. He was not alone. Today, as well as throughout the history of Christendom, such persons have appeared in every generation, claiming that “signs, wonders and miracles” will accompany those who truly believe. But is this true? Are they for today?

One of the unique features of the Bible is its revelation of the supernatural, and that primarily through “signs, wonders, and miracles.” No other major religious book, whether it be the Koran of Islam, the Sayings of Confucius, or the Veda’s of Hinduism report such astounding happenings as those revealed in the Word of God. Both the Old and New Testaments abound with eyewitness reports of these supernatural events. In order to answer the lead questions, it will be necessary to do a concordance study of this very important subject.

Most of the Bible commentaries treat the words “signs, wonders, and miracles” as synonyms since these three terms seem interchangeable in some settings. Depending upon which English translation a person may use, it will also be noted that the words may be in a reverse order. These observations do not alter the fact that the Holy Spirit who inspired these words chose them to clearly explain the uniqueness of these supernatural manifestations revealed in the Bible. Each word will therefore be carefully defined according to their usage in the original languages in the Old and New Testaments.

## DEFINITIONS

1. **Signs** Three Hebrew words are used to describe these supernatural events. The first is **oth** which is translated a “sign” sixty times in the Old Testament. The emphasis of this word is not upon the event itself, but rather upon the person performing the miracle. The sign was designed to confirm the character and the authority of a person as a messenger of God. Moses was extolled as such a person in Deuteronomy 34:10-12:

*“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face. For all the signs and wonders... and for all the mighty power and for the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.”*

The second word is **mopheth**, which is sometimes translated “miracle” (Exodus. 7:9), sometimes “sign” (Deut. 29:3) and twenty-three times “wonder.” This lack of consistency in translation is the cause of some of the confusion regarding these Biblical words. However, whenever **mopheth** is included with the words “signs” and “miracles” it refers to a separate and distinct supernatural work of Almighty God, with the emphasis upon the miracle worker.

The third word is **pala** and was used by Gideon when he asked: “Where are all the miracles which our fathers told us about?” (Judges 6:13) In context this word includes all the miraculous signs and wonders related to the ten judgments upon Egypt and the divine provision of clothing, sandals, food, and water during the forty-year sojourn in the desert (Deuteronomy 29:4-6).

Four Greek words are used in the New Testament to describe the miraculous. The first one is **dunamis** which is translated “miracle” eight times and “power” seventy-seven times. The emphasis is upon the power and authority of an individual to perform exorcisms (Mark 9:39) and healings (Acts 8:5-13). **Dunamis** is also used to describe the spiritual gift of divine healing (1 Cor. 12:10, 28) which, interestingly is distinguished from “miracles” in 1 Cor. 12:29 and Hebrews 2:4. They are not necessarily one and the same.

The second and most common word is **semeion** which is rendered “miracle” twenty-two times and “sign” fifty-one times. Jesus’ many miracles are called “signs” in the Gospel of John. In each case the emphasis of the word is on the authentication of the Messiah – a valid proof that Jesus is God (John 2:11, 23). Nicodemus recognized this truth when he declared that “no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). The



word “miracle” is used to signify a variety of supernatural events including turning water into wine, feeding multitudes, healing thousands, and resurrecting the dead. In each case the overriding purpose of the miracles was to attest to the Lord Jesus’ divinity. In spite of the overwhelming evidence that He was who He claimed to be, the majority of those who heard Him and saw His miraculous powers refused to believe in Him. (John 4:48, 6:66).

The third word used in the New Testament to denote a miracle is **ergon** and is universally translated “works”. This is Jesus’ favorite way of speaking of His miracles. For example, He said in John 5:36:

*“But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me.”*

The fourth New Testament Greek word is **teras** and is translated “wonder” sixteen times. The emphasis is upon physical phenomenon, which causes amazement, astonishment, and bewilderment on the part of the spectators. (Acts 3:10-11, Matthew 15:31, Mark 6:51). A miracle that can be explained is no miracle at all. Jesus was constantly appealed to, to do something extraordinary and this He refused to do. (Matthew 8:12). These four words: “power,” “signs,” “works,” and “wonder” give us the true characteristics of a miracle.

2. **Wonders** As already noted, the Hebrew word **mopheth** is sometimes translated “miracles,” but in twenty-three instances it is rendered “wonders” indicating something unique and different from the miraculous. Most of the usages of this word relate to the plagues of Egypt and the events associated with the exodus adventure. As the Lord said to Moses: “When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have put in your power” (Exodus 4:21). Joel prophesied of a day when God “will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke,” the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord” (Joel 2:30-31).
3. **MIRACLES** We casually use the word “miracles” to describe anything that smacks of the unusual or supernatural, whether it be a narrow escape from a near accident to the quick recovery from an illness. The Bible uses words in a more restrictive way. It is essential to use Bible words the Bible way. This is especially true when it comes to the word “miracles.” Having said that, it may come as a surprise to learn that there is no special Greek

word for “miracles” apart from the various terms we have already examined.

In other words, the original text that God breathed-out by the Holy Spirit provided the authors of Scripture with the sacred words and then the translators selected which term to use in their translation based on which words were already in the text. Our English word “miracles” occurs frequently in most translations. Sometimes the word “miracles” is based on the Greek word *dunamis* as in Acts 19:11 and Hebrews 2:4. At other times it is based on *semeion* as in John 2:22. Still other times it based on *teras* as in Acts 2:22. To help clarify this derivative question, the NASB translation, used in this study, offers an optional marginal note of “attesting miracles” whenever *semeion* is the root word and “works of power” whenever *dunamis* is the root word. Miracles can therefore be defined as a spiritual manifestation of divine power. It is a special revelation of the presence and power of God. It is something beyond the normal and beyond natural law.

## DEMONSTRATIONS

A total of thirty-three of Jesus’ miracles are recorded in the four gospels, all of which demonstrate who He is, His power, and His glory. At the outset of our Lord’s earthly ministry, it was reported that He had been accredited by “miracles, wonders, and signs” (Acts 2:22). This He demonstrated by attending a village wedding in Cana where He met a physical need by turning water-pots into wine-jars (John 2:11). This was spectacular, but there were more. For John bears witness that “there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written” (John 21:25).

Early in the Lord’s public ministry He gave His twelve men “power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases” (Luke 9:2). After this He commissioned seventy-two of His disciples to heal the sick, and to cast out demons, (Luke 10:9-17). Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, God continued to reveal Himself by “signs, wonders, and miracles.” On the Day of Pentecost “everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles (Acts 2:43). Acts 4:30 reveals that the disciples were praying that “God would extend His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders would take place through the name of Jesus.” Acts 5:12 states that “at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people.” More startling things were happening... Believers were speaking a language they had

never learned. Cripples were healed on the streets of Jerusalem. Imprisoned apostles were supernaturally released. Demons fled on demand and people were healed by the passing shadow of an apostle.

In Jerusalem Stephen was performing “great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). Likewise, “Great signs and miracles were taking place” as Philip preached in Samaria (Acts 8:13). Meanwhile Peter was preaching in Lydda where he healed a paralytic and raised Dorcus from the dead (Acts 9:33-41).

The greatest display of the miraculous occurred throughout the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He reminded the believers at Corinth that “the signs of a true apostle, were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs, wonders, and miracles” (2 Corinthians 12:12). Wherever Paul went on his missionary journeys, his preaching was always accompanied by the supernatural. In the midst of controversy, Paul settled the question of Gentile salvation by reporting to the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem “what signs and wonders God did through them among the Gentiles” (Acts 15:12).

On his third missionary venture “God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hand of Paul so that handkerchiefs and aprons were even carried from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and evil spirits went out” (Acts 19:12). On his journey to Rome, Paul was shipwrecked on the Island of Malta and there “the people of the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured” (Acts 28:9). In Paul’s letter to the Italian believers, he reported on his ministry among the Gentiles and how he ministered “in the power of signs and wonders in the power of the Spirit” (Romans 15:19).

## **DUPLICATIONS**

Satan is the master counterfeiter. One of his diabolical acts is to duplicate the works of God. This was very evident in Pharaoh’s encounter with Moses and Aaron in Egypt. Exodus 7-9 records that Pharaoh demanded a miracle and in response to that request Aaron threw his shepherd’s staff to the ground and it immediately became a snake. Pharaoh’s men duplicated this miracle! The only scriptural and sensible explanation of this feat is to realize that Satan empowered these magicians, It certainly was not God.

Likewise, when Aaron turned the Nile River waters into blood, the sorcerers duplicated this miracle. And they did the same with the plague of frogs. When they attempted to replicate the plague of gnats, they failed as they did with the remaining seven calamities. Satan is powerful, but not all powerful.

Jesus warned in advance of the coming Great Tribulation that “false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders” (Matthew 24:24). Paul further revealed that the coming Antichrist will be “in accord with the activity of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This is further confirmed in the Revelation that the coming “Beast” (The Antichrist) will “receive his power and his throne and great authority from Satan” (V:2). The second “Beast” (The False Prophet) will also perform great signs so that he will “make fire to come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men” (V:13). He will also deceive those who dwell on the earth “because of the sign which was given to him to perform,” which includes creating a statue of the Antichrist which will actually speak! (V:14). Revelation 16:14 reveals that in those terrible days the “spirits of demons will be performing signs which go out to the kings of the whole world.”

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on this overview of early church history, we can conclude that “signs, wonders, and miracles” did accompany certain preachers of the gospel, but not all. Other apostles may have witnessed these supernatural happenings, but we have no inspired scriptures to confirm them. Then too, no one has been, nor is, duplicating the amazing miracles of the Bible.
2. In the light of this information regarding “signs, wonders, and miracles” it is imperative that we “examine everything carefully” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). We are urged to “test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because any false prophets have gone out in the world” (1 John 4:1). Don’t be deceived!
3. Today, miracles are irrelevant as a sign of divine approval. True Christian ministers do not need sign miracles to prove they are from God. We have the Bible and like the Bereans of old, we need to “receive the word with great eagerness, examining the scriptures daily to see whether these things are so” (Acts 17:11). Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord,’ ‘Lord,’ did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform miracles? And then I will declare to them: “I never knew you, depart from me...” (Matthew 7:22-23).
4. Even though God has withdrawn the supernatural sign miracles of the Bible, He still hears and answers prayer. Therefore, “be not faithless, but believing” (John 20:27).

*All scriptural quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.*

## QUIZ: ON ATTIRE AND APPEARANCES

1. The gown with collar (talar) is most likely worn by a minister who is
  - \_\_\_ a. Evangelical Free
  - \_\_\_ b. Lutheran
  - \_\_\_ c. Southern Baptist
  - \_\_\_ d. Seventh Day Adventist
  
2. Orange saffron clothing is worn by
  - \_\_\_ a. Jehovah's Witnesses
  - \_\_\_ b. Bible Presbyterians
  - \_\_\_ c. Scientologists
  - \_\_\_ d. Hare Krishnas
  
3. Genuflections are practiced by
  - \_\_\_ a. Southern Methodists
  - \_\_\_ b. Russian Orthodox
  - \_\_\_ c. Mennonites
  - \_\_\_ d. Pentecostals
  
4. Jewish men often wear these at prayer and study
  - \_\_\_ a. Yarmulkes
  - \_\_\_ b. Lederhosen
  - \_\_\_ c. Bandannas
  - \_\_\_ d. Jackboots

5. Adopted from India by the Nazis as their symbol
- a. Goatshead
  - b. Coat of Arms
  - c. Swastika
  - d. Union Jack
6. Title identified with a leader of the Orthodox Church
- a. Metropolitan
  - b. Pope
  - c. Grand Marshall
  - d. Generalissimo
7. Sacred underwear is worn by devoted
- a. Hard Shell Baptists
  - b. Cumberland Presbyterians
  - c. Mormons
  - d. Christian Scientists
8. The Star of David has how many points?
- a. eight
  - b. five
  - c. seven
  - d. six
9. Bagpipes and kilts are parts of this nation's lore
- a. Denmark
  - b. Scotland
  - c. Wales
  - d. Belgium

10. What sign appeared to Constantine when he converted to Christianity?

- \_\_\_ a. Cross
- \_\_\_ b. Sword
- \_\_\_ c. Key
- \_\_\_ d. Bible

**Answers:**

1. (b); 2. (d); 3. (b); 4. (a); 5. (c); 6. (a); 7. (c); 8. (d); 9. (b); 10. (a).

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