

The Discerner

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

A QUARTERLY EXPOSING
UNBIBLICAL TEACHING & MOVEMENTS

Volume 43, Number 1

January February March 2023

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Hare Krishna

Freemasons

Jehovah's Witnesses

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

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The Discerner

A Christian Apologetics & Counter-
Cult Ministry

Volume 43, Number 1

January February March 2023

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Published Quarterly

Price \$10.00 for 4 issues

Foreign subscriptions \$14.00

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WITH THIS ISSUE

Peace and blessings with everlasting hope and eternal security in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

As we begin another year of publishing *The Discerner*, we here at RAS are reminded of the command that Paul spoke to Timothy (and us as well) regarding the current state of time as well as the future:

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (2 Timothy 4:2)

The need for biblical truth, sound teaching, and mature spiritual discernment is greater than ever as we are being bombarded by mounds of misinformation and bold demonic influences. With this in mind, let's begin 2023 with a look at what is often labeled "Christian" but in Truth is actually "Anti-Christian."

Our first featured article in this issue of *The Discerner* is an exposé on the so-called New Apostolic Reformation. Anthony Wood, pastor of Mission Bible Church in Costa Mesa, California, examines the extremes of this Pentecostal movement.

Our second article is by the founding pastors of Dwell Community Church in Columbus, Ohio. They have put together an interesting overview and comparison of several cults including Christian Science, The Way of Victor Paul Wierville, the Unification Church, Mormonism, and the Jehovah's Witnesses. The reader can quickly see how far these cultic movements depart from biblical faith.

Our last article is by Tal Davis of MarketFaith ministries on the place of the conscience in the Christian life. This is valuable information. Davis will remind us that—while helpful—the human conscience can be dulled through determined and habitual sin; therefore, a person loses the feeling of guilt when they break God's laws.

And when you are done reading, please enjoy our Quarterly Quiz. How well do you know the Gospel of John?

Thank you for your continued support of Religion Analysis Service. Your gifts and contributions make this publication and ongoing 'ministry of truth' possible *"in season and out of season."*

Blessings in Christ,

Steve Lagoon and Doug Steiner

On behalf of the Board of Religion Analysis Service

UPENDED BY THE NEW APOSTOLIC REFORMATION

By Anthony Wood

Introduction

One of the most alarming trends in evangelicalism is the desire to experience God outside of Scripture via signs, wonders, and emotive mysticism. For centuries, theologians warned that the protestant kettle could increase its “mystical heat” to the point adherents would burn to death unawares. Calvin contends,

“Their requiring miracles of us is unreasonable; for we forge no new gospel but retain the very same whose truth was confirmed by all the miracles ever wrought by Christ and the Apostles.”¹

Today that protestant kettle boils over as droves of American worshippers clamor to churches that long ago abandoned the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. Carl Trueman laments,

“A movement that will not draw boundaries, or that allows the modern cultural fear of exclusion to set its theological agenda, is doomed to lose its doctrine and drift from the moorings of historic Christianity.”²

It is well known that evangelical (fundamentalist) leaders of the 20th century diligently defended Scripture from modernists aiming to “cut out” portions of the Bible. Now we live in a period of history where

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. John Allen, editor and translator. (Philadelphia, 1909 edition), Vol. I:26.

² Carl R. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2011).

Scripture must be protected from mystics seeking to “add” upon the Bible. The battle for inerrancy is now the battle for sufficiency.

The advance of Hyper-Charismatic teaching is circling the globe. In 2013–14, the New York Times recognized *Jesus Calling* by Sarah Young³ as being at the top of its national best-seller rankings.

Introducing her book, Young explains she had received a prophetic “dialogue” from God, placing her words in the mouth of God. The most influential “church” globally is now Hillsong, a network of mega-churches boasting millions of followers. Their statement of faith highlights a continuation of the revelatory gifts along with a prosperity promise,

“The Holy Spirit enables us to use spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues...God wants to heal and transform us so that we can live healthy and blessed lives in order to help others more effectively.”⁴

In the spring of 2019, forty thousand college students packed Camping World Arena in Tampa, Florida, claiming to be “The greatest Jesus movement.” Center stage at the event were notorious Word-Faith and prosperity teachers, including Bill Johnson, Heidi Baker, and Todd White. Even in the White House, President Donald Trump’s leading spiritual advisor Paula White was well-known Word-Faith teacher and consort of Benny Hinn. Make no mistake, the sufficiency of Scripture is under full-frontal assault by the next generation of so-called evangelical leaders.

A New Vision of Christianity

[To repeat], For centuries theologians warned that the protestant kettle could increase its “mystical heat” to the point adherents would burn to death unawares.

The most dangerous group of Hyper-Charismatic churches are coined the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR), a title that came from their founder C. Peter Wagner in the late 1990’s. Wagner was a Fuller Seminary professor with John Wimber, who branched off to launch his own Wagner University in 2001, committing to launching the final “reformation” of global Christianity.

The building blocks for his [C. Peter Wagner’s] new vision of Christianity consisted of 1) tearing down existing denominations, 2) reinstituting

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/books/best-sellers/2015/08/09/religion-spirituality-and-faith> (Accessed 10/4/21; RAS verified 1/8/23).

⁴ Hillsong Church, *Statement of Faith*, <https://hillsong.com/what-we-believe> (Accessed 9/27/21; RAS 1/8/23).

the office of apostle, 3) proffering a postmillennial dominion theology, and 4) exercising the miracle gifts within the church again.

Over the past two decades, countless entrepreneurial young leaders have launched from Wagner's school, and the "reformation" has begun. The most famous graduate (and current teacher) of Wagner University is Bill Johnson, Sr. Pastor of Bethel Church in Redding, CA, a church that boasts 10,000 in attendance, a 2,000 student School of Supernatural Ministry, and a music ministry (Jesus Culture) that spans the globe.

Bill Johnson's Theology

Due to Johnson's significant global influence and number of published books, we'll evaluate New Apostolic Reformation theology via his own hand.

Systematic theology textbooks are typically broken up into ten categories: Bibliology, Theology Proper, Anthropology, Christology, Pneumatology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Angelology, and Eschatology.

Although there is diversity in interpretation, many volumes of protestant theology agree on essentials. Our agreement on the essentials allows us to examine how Bill Johnson, Bethel Church, and the New Apostolic Reformation are outside of Christian orthodoxy and truly deserve to be called heresy.

There is one reality that connects all true Christians: a high view of God. In the simplest form, the virgin birth, hypostatic union, sinless Christ, substitutionary death, and resurrection of [Jesus] Christ rest under the nature and consequential understanding of a triune God. This God has created, has chosen to reveal Himself, is sovereign, omnipotent, and thereby demands and deserves worship. The import of this cannot be overstated, as the majesty of God stands in contrast to the incapability of humanity. In short, man needs God. Without God, there is no man. Man has no power of his own. Man cannot rescue himself, nor will man ever save another.

Sadly, this is not what the New Apostolic Reformation and teachers like Bill Johnson believe. Instead, Johnson and friends turn Scripture upside down, ultimately turning man into the hero.

In our limited space, we will examine eight Systematic Theology categories regarding Bill Johnson's Theology.

Bibliology

First, note that Johnson softly dismisses the authority of the Bible. Paul wrote,

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” ([2 Timothy 3:16–17](#))

Conversely, Johnson writes,

“We’ve gone as far as we can with our present understanding of Scripture. It’s time to let signs have their place.”⁵

There are multiple fallacies in Johnson’s statement, the most dangerous being isolation of Christian ministry as over and against scriptural doctrine. Regarding early 20th century efforts to divide Scripture from church, J. Gresham Machen labeled this kind of teaching “modern hostility to doctrine.”⁶

Wayne Grudem adds,

“Scripture contained all the words of God He intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting Him perfectly, and for obeying Him perfectly.”⁷

Hence, Christianity must disavow any supposed separation between Christian doctrine and Christian ministry because a life lived in obedience to God is founded on the message of God.

The import of this cannot be overstated, as the majesty of God stands in contrast to the incapability of humanity. In short, man needs God.

Theology Proper

Second, Johnson upends the doctrine of God.

In the Genesis record, Moses wrote, “*God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was good.*” ([Genesis 1:31](#)). Johnson imbibes on Dominion Theology regarding creation, proffering a “prelapsarian evil” that supposedly forced God to make man as earth’s rescuer. Johnson writes,

⁵ Bill Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image, 2003), 141.

⁶ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923), 18.

⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 127.

“The planet needed to be subdued; it was under the influence of darkness...Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden with a mission, to defeat darkness, and extend God’s glorious rule through man.”⁸

If you’ve not studied Dominion Theology, the short of it is that Johnson believes God lost “legal” control of the earth to Satan. After Jesus came, man was given responsibility (via religion, business, and the arts) to reclaim dominion of the world. This idea of a prelapsarian sin or paleo-natural evil stands a priori against all historic reformational doctrine, based on God’s own words of seeing His creation as “very good” before man’s corruption.⁹

Christology

Third, Johnson contorts the doctrine of Christ.

Christianity has agreed on Jesus as the 100% God-man (cf. [John 1:14](#); [John 17:5](#); [Hebrews 1:1–2](#)), and formally recognized this at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). The nature of Christ was described as consisting of a hypostatic union—one Person with two natures. Johnson, however, teaches an ontological kenotic theology, wherein Christ divests Himself of divinity. Johnson writes,

“Jesus had no supernatural capabilities...Jesus became the model for all who would embrace the invitation to invade the impossible in His name. He performed miracles, wonders, and signs, as a man in right relationship to God, not as God.”¹⁰

Further, Johnson contends, “Jesus lived His earthly life with human limitation. He laid his divinity aside.”¹¹ Note Schreiner’s response to any theology that mutes Christ’s divinity:

“The divinity of Jesus is confirmed by the phrase “equality with God” in [\[Philippians\] 2:6](#), for Jesus’ equality with God is another way of speaking of the “form of God.” Nor does [\[Philippians\] 2:7](#) indicate that Jesus surrendered his deity in becoming a human being. If we attend to the Greek participles in the text, it becomes clear that Jesus emptied himself by becoming a slave, by taking on humanity. *The*

⁸ Johnson, *When Heaven Invades Earth*, 30. [RAS Note: Prelapsarian - The time before the Fall of Man.]

⁹ In addition to the testimony of Scripture, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley all held such a view; see E.L. Mascall, *Christian Theology and Natural Science* (New York: Ronal Press, 1956), 32.

¹⁰ Johnson, 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

*emptying consisted not in removing Christ's deity but rather in the addition of his humanity. Paul utilizes paradoxical language by describing Christ's emptying in terms of adding."*¹²

Pneumatology

Fourth, Johnson creates a two-tiered pneumatology.

The book of Acts highlights a promise of Christ wherein believers would be baptized with the Spirit. The promise of this baptism was initially made by Christ ([Acts 1:5](#)) as an event that would happen at a singular point in time, consequently fulfilled in [Acts 2:1–4](#). Acts describes three subsequent “baptisms” in/with the Spirit ([Acts Chapters 8; 10; 19](#)), specifically to the Gentiles, Samaritans, and the disciples of John the Baptist.

In each of these unique experiences, Luke highlights the initiation of believers into the newly founded church body, highlighting the period of transition from Old Covenant to New Covenant. Sadly, Bill Johnson turns Acts from description to prescription, urging all believers to seek a second experience of the Spirit, from which they will be immersed into true spiritual power.

Johnson writes,

“The baptism of the Spirit (separate from conversion) is an immersion into dunamis. The ability to pray in tongues is a gift...The fullness of God ought to do more than give me supernatural language...His purposes are to bring us into divine partnership. When the spirit of God came upon people in Scripture, all nature bowed to them.”¹³

Here, Johnson joins the chorus of historic “Higher Life” theologians contending that a second baptism of the Spirit is necessary for spiritual vitality. Yet, he pushes it further, suggesting true Christians conduct miraculous healings of their own. This belief system culminates in a Christianity of two classes—the carnal and the spiritual, the powerless and the powerful—ultimately doing grave injustice to the saving and securing power of the gospel at conversion ([2 Peter 1:3](#)).

Soteriology

Fifth, Johnson perverts the doctrine of soteriology.

¹²Thomas R. Schreiner, *Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 88. Emphasis added.

¹³Johnson, 129.

[Romans 3:23–25](#) teaches, “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith....*”

The atoning work of Christ for sin is doctrinal bedrock upon which historic Christianity resides. Christ’s penal substitution was central to His purpose on earth (cf. [Isaiah 53:6](#); [John 1:29](#); [Romans 4:3–5](#); [Romans 5:18–19](#); [Galatians 3:13](#); [Hebrews 2:17](#)). But Johnson steers wide of sin in his gospel explanations, instead offering the gospel as efficacious for physical health and wellness. Johnson states,

“In Adam and Eve’s commission to subdue the earth, they were without sickness, poverty, and sin. Now that we are restored to His original purpose, should we expect anything less?”¹⁴

Johnson continues,

“A woman who needed a miracle once told me she felt God had allowed her sickness for a purpose. I told her that if I treated my children that way, I’d be arrested for child abuse. After the truth came into her heart, her healing came.”¹⁵

Angelology

Sixth, Johnson distorts the doctrine of angelology.

Biblical teaching on angels clarifies that the Lord oversees the commission and withdrawal of angelic forces. Luke asserts,

“*And when Peter came to himself, he said, ‘Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod...’*” ([Acts 12:11](#))

Johnson’s teaching on the angelic realm moves toward lunacy. He postulates,

“Angels wait on you. I believe angels pick up the fragrance of the throne room through the word spoken by people. They can tell when a word has its origin in the heart of the Father. And, in turn, they recognize that word as their assignment.”¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., 33.

¹⁵Ibid., 45.

¹⁶Ibid., 140.

Johnson provides no biblical defense to assert how he knows angels pick up on fragrance and respond to commands from human prayer life.

Ecclesiology

Seventh, Johnson refutes historic ecclesiology.

Other [IFCA](#) [Independent Fundamental Churches of America] articles have been written examining the destructive ministry habits of New Apostolic Reformation [NAR] churches [see Gary Gilley's blog reel, Think on These Things]. Yet it must be mentioned that NAR believes in the fully functioning office of the apostle for the modern-day.

Regarding apostles, Paul clearly defined them as part of the foundation which would launch the Church. In [Ephesians 2:20](#), he describes the Church as being. "...*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.*" Here, Paul states that the church's foundation was comprised of three elements (apostle, prophet, Christ). These elements would ultimately produce the truths upon which all else is built.¹⁷

It's hard to overstate the importance of this truth because it limits the period in which apostles would live and minister to the first and second generation of Christian witnesses and explains, in part, the cessation of the charismata. Interestingly, Johnson does not respond exegetically here, but rather unleashes an attack on those who hold to a cessation of the charismata and office of the apostle:

"Can you imagine what would happen if modern fear-oriented theologians had been with [Israel] in the desert? They would have created new doctrines explaining why the supernatural ministry that brought them out of Egypt was no longer necessary...After all, now they had tablets of stone...From such people, turn away! How can people who love God be offended by the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Every time we allow the Holy Spirit's leading, we fly in the face of that antichrist spirit."¹⁸

Eschatology

Eighth, Johnson emphasizes a post-millennial theocracy.

¹⁷Paul uses 'genitives of apposition' here. There is significant consensus on this interpretation, e.g., Robertson, *A Grammar of the New Testament in Light of Historical Research*, 498; Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond The Basics*, 100; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians To Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 304.

¹⁸Johnson, 82–83.

Eschatology has been a hotly debated topic for the last two centuries of the church; yet, within the IFCA we have a robust premillennial agreement. Johnson and his consorts, however, platform a Dominion Theology teaching. It is their role in rectifying society—family, education, government, business, media, arts, and religion—to complete righteousness so that Christ may return.

Johnson’s mentor, C. Peter Wagner clarifies,

“We are seeing prophets and apostles coming forth for a strategic reason... positioned to lay new foundations for the dawning of a new kingdom age. We are in the throes of birthing a new order...This means our divine mandate is to do whatever is necessary, by the Holy Spirit, to retake the dominion of God’s creation.”¹⁹

To this end, Wagner and Johnson assault historic premillennial eschatology as weak and faithless. Johnson mocks,

“...[Premillennial theology] disarms and distracts from the true mind of Christ, one of triumph...Their predisposition to see a weak, struggling Church in the last days has made it difficult to see the promise of God for revival. It is impossible to have faith where you have no hope. This has crippled the Church.”²⁰

Conclusion

It is no accident that the New Apostolic Reformation upends essential doctrine. Satan perverts truth. Good counterfeiters do not wipe out the real thing; they mirror it.

With conniving twists, the New Apostolic Reformation has drawn the authority of Scripture into question, suggesting God lost control. Suddenly, man is no longer a sinner but a sufferer. Christ died to offer physical healing. The Spirit morphs men into superheroes, token angels aid as butlers, the Church as a cosmic healing center, and the eschaton as a giant utopian conquest. Man no longer needs God, for he has become God. *Sound the alarm*—these are the leaders, sermons, bands, and songs infiltrating the next generation of our churches.

¹⁹C. Peter Wagner, *Churchquake!* (Ventura: Regal, 1999).

²⁰Johnson, 165–66.

About the Author and this Article

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Used by permission of IFCA International, VOICE Magazine, November/December 2021, Volume 100, Number 6.

The RAS editorial team made minor changes in formatting and content which in no way are meant to change the author's original work, contents, and conclusions.

CHRISTIAN CULTS AND SECTS

By Gary DeLashmutt and Dennis McCallum

I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a documented overview of the major "Christian" sects, or what some have called cults. We are using the term sects to avoid the much more complicated concept of cults. *Specific attention is given to the essential biblical doctrines which they deny.*

No information is given on the origin and founders of the sects, since this is of relatively minor importance to the apologetic task. Guidelines are supplied to help the Christian worker in his communication of this information. An extensive bibliography is provided and recommended for further study.

II. Bibliology: The Source of Authority

The source of doctrinal authority for spiritual truth is crucial. The source(s) which a group acknowledges will tend to determine the entire doctrinal framework of that group. This area, therefore, is the foundational issue between biblical Christianity and the sects. *Biblical Christianity acknowledges the Bible alone as authoritative because it alone is inspired by God.*

The sects also usually acknowledge the Bible as the inspired word of God. However, most of them claim that other writings are also inspired. These writings become the final doctrinal authority, since they are usually the grid through which the Bible is interpreted. Some sects ("Jehovah's Witnesses" and "The Way") believe that the Bible alone is

inspired, but claim to have the uniquely correct interpretation and/or translation of the Bible. This interpretation becomes in practice the final authority of the sect.

A. Acknowledgement by Sects that the Bible is the Inspired Word of God

Mormonism: “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly¹; we also believe the Book of Mormon² to be the word of God.”³

Christian Science: “The Bible has been my only authority.⁴ I have had no other guide in “the straight and narrow way” of Truth. In following these leadings of scientific revelation, the Bible was my only textbook.”⁵

Jehovah’s Witnesses: “The Holy Scriptures of the Bible are the standard by which to judge all religions.”⁶ “To let God be found true means to let God have the say to what is the truth that sets men free...Our obligation is to back up what is said herein by quotations from the Bible for proof of truthfulness and reliability.”^{7,8}

The Way: “There is no room for interpretation or discussion. We must come to The Word, let The Word speak, and then adjust our thinking according to the integrity and accuracy of The Word. After we have let The Word speak, we must accordingly harmonize our beliefs, our actions, and our living.”⁹

¹ And it is the false prophets of Mormonism that decide when the Bible was supposed to have been “translated correctly.” This is a strange claim in light of the fact that through the science of textual criticism, and the thousands of New Testament Manuscripts available, there is no need to question the essential accuracy of Bible translations.

² Christians should reject any writing claiming inspiration or authority which is not in accord with what God has already revealed in the Bible as is the case with the Book of Mormon.

³ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 18, citing letter to the author from Mark E Peterson of the Council of the Twelve, dated July 6, 1962.

⁴ The fact is that Mary Baker Eddy claimed that one cannot properly interpret the Bible without the aid of her work, *Science and Health with Key to Scriptures*, requiring her followers to place her writings as more authoritative than the Bible itself, a blasphemous claim.

⁵ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Boston MA (The First Church of Christ, Scientists, 1891, 1971) p. 110., cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p.21.

⁶ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* (Brooklyn, New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1951), p. 32.

⁷ *Let God Be True*, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, (Rev. ed. 1952), p. 9.

⁸ As the authors explain in the introduction, here is an example in which the Watchtower organization claims to have the Bible as the highest authority, but in actual practice, the writings of the Watchtower itself have that place for Jehovah’s Witnesses.

⁹ Victor Paul Wierwille, *Power for Abundant Living* (New Knoxville, Ohio: The American Christian Press, 1971), p. 96., cited in Ronald M. Enroth, *A Guide To Cults and New Religions* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity

The Unification Church: “Until our mission with the Christian church is over, we must quote the Bible and use it to explain the Divine Principle. After we receive the inheritance of the Christian Church, we will be free to teach without the Bible.”¹⁰

B. Sects Claims that Additional Writings are Inspired by God

Mormonism: “And now, verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the First-born; And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the First-born. Ye were also in the beginning with the Father...”¹¹

Christian Science: “I should blush to write of Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, as I have, were it of human origin, and were I apart from God, its author. But, as I was only a scribe echoing the harmonies of heaven in divine metaphysics, I cannot be super-modest in my estimate of the Christian Science textbook.”¹²

“A Christian Scientist requires my work Science and Health for his textbook, and so do all his students and patients. Why? First: Because it is the voice of Truth to this age, and contains the full statement of Christian Sciences, or the Science of healing through Mind. Second: Because it was the first book known, containing a thorough statement of Christian Science. Hence it gave the first rules for demonstrating this Science, and registered the revealed Truth uncontaminated by human hypotheses.”¹³

The Unification Church: “It may be displeasing to religious believers, especially to Christians, to learn that a new expression of truth must appear. They believe that the Bible, which they now have, is perfect and absolute in itself.”¹⁴

Press, 1983), p. 180.

¹⁰ As quoted in *Eternity*, April 1976, p. 27, cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), p. 37.

¹¹ *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, Salt Lake City UT (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1835, 1952), 93:21–23.

¹² *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, Boston, MA (The First Church of Christ, Scientists, 1941), p. 115, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, United Kingdom (Paternoster Press, 1973), p.22.

¹³ *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, pp. 456–57, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Divine Principle*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.): The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973, p.9.

“...The New Testament Words of Jesus and the Holy Spirit will lose their light...to ‘lose their light’ means that the period of their mission has elapsed with the coming of the new age.”¹⁵

III. Christology: The Person of Christ

The Bible clearly asserts both the humanity and deity of Jesus Christ. The biblical authors regard rejection or alteration of this doctrine as heresy ([1 John 4:1–6](#); [Colossians 2:4, 8–9](#)), since it directly affects the meaning and value of His death on the cross.

The modern sects almost universally attack the deity of Christ. While some sects make this denial outright, others are more ambiguous. *But all have departed from the clear biblical position.*

A. Sects’ Claims that Jesus is Not Fully God

Mormonism: “The divinity of Jesus is the truth which now requires to be received...the divinity of Jesus and [divinity] of all other noble and saintly souls, insofar as they, too, have been inflamed by a spark of deity—insofar as they, too, can be recognized as manifestations of the Divine.”¹⁶

Christian Science: “The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as material manhood, was not Christ.” “In healing the sick and sinning, Jesus elaborated the fact that the healing effect followed the understanding of the divine Principle and of the Christ-spirit which governed the corporeal Jesus.”¹⁷

Jehovah’s Witness: “He was a spirit person, just as ‘God is a Spirit’; he was a mighty one, although not almighty as Jehovah God is; also he was before all others of God’s creatures, for he was the first son that Jehovah God brought forth. Hence he is called ‘the only begotten Son’ of God, for God has no partner in bringing forth his first-begotten Son.”¹⁸

The Way: “...The Gospel of John established the truth of God’s Word that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, not ‘God the Son’ or ‘God Himself’.”¹⁹

¹⁵*Divine Principle*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.): The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973, p.9.

¹⁶Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, p. 54, citing *Teaching of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 347.

¹⁷*Miscellaneous Writings*, p.84, 141, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 42.

¹⁸Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God Be True*, p. 32.

¹⁹Victor Paul Wierville, *Jesus Christ is Not God*, New Knoxville OH (The American Christian Press, 1975) p. 16., cited in Walter R. Martin, *The New Cults* (Santa Ana, Ca.: Vision House, 1981), p. 54.

The Unification Church: “Historically, Jesus the Messiah came in Adam’s place to restore mankind. He was not Deity...it is a great error to think Jesus was God Himself.”²⁰

B. Sects’ Explanations of Jesus’ “Actual” Identity

Mormonism: “Jesus Christ is not the Father of the spirits who have taken or yet shall take bodies upon this earth, for He is one of them. He is The Son as they are sons or daughters of Elohim.”²¹

Christian Science: “Christ is the ideal Truth, that comes to heal sickness and sin through Christian Sciences, and attributes all power to God. Jesus is the name of the man who, more than all other men, has presented Christ, the true idea of God...Jesus is the human man, and Christ is the divine idea; hence the duality of Jesus the Christ.”²²

“He is “the spiritual or true idea of God.” “Christ, as the true spiritual idea, is the ideal of God now and forever...”²³

Jehovah’s Witness: “...at [Colossians 1:15](#) he is spoken of as ‘the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation’. Thus he is ranked with God’s creation, being first among them and also most beloved and most favored among them. He is not the author of the creation of God; but, after God had created him as his firstborn Son, then God used him as his working Partner in the creating of all the rest of creation. It is so stated at [Colossians 1:16–18](#) and at [John 1:1–3](#), NW.”²⁴

The Way: “Those who teach that Jesus Christ is God and God is Jesus Christ will never stand approved in ‘rightly dividing’ God’s word, for there is only one God, and ‘thou shalt have no other gods’. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ was a man conceived by the Holy Spirit, God, whose life was without blemish and without spot, a lamb from the flock, thereby being the perfect sacrifice. Thus he became our redeemer.”²⁵

“...we note that Jesus Christ is directly referred to as the “Son of God” in more than 50 verses in the New Testament; he is called “God” in four.

²⁰ *DPA*, p. 75; cf. *DPSG*, p. 192 and *DP*, pp.211ff., cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 29, 30.

²¹ *Doctrines and Covenants*, pp. 472, 473.

²² *Miscellaneous Writing*, p. 473, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 42.

²³ *Miscellaneous Writing*, p.347,361, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 42.

²⁴ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God be True*, p.32–33. [RAS note: NW-New World Bible translation, 2013]

²⁵ *Jesus Christ is Not God*, p. 79, cited in Walter R. Martin, *The New Cults*, pp. 54, 55.

(Never is he called “God the Son”.) By sheer weight of this evidence alone, 50 to 4, the truth should be evident.”²⁶

The Unification Church: “Jesus on earth’ was a man no different from us except for the fact that He was without original sin.”²⁷

IV. Soteriology: The Work of Christ on The Cross

The Bible claims that man’s acceptance with God is based entirely on Christ’s work on the cross, completely apart from man’s works for God ([Galatians 2:16, 21](#); [Romans 3:19–26](#)). Because of this, man receives God’s acceptance as a free gift by faith alone ([Ephesians 2:8, 9](#)). Though saving faith is evidenced by works in the life of the believer ([James 2:16–24](#)), they are regarded as the fruit of salvation ([Galatians 5:22–23](#)), not as the basis for it. The biblical authors pronounce the strongest judgment on any teachers who alter this message ([Galatians 1:3–9](#)).

The sects generally attack the full sufficiency of Christ’s work on the cross and thus make salvation dependent finally upon man’s works for God. *Usually, the claim is made that both faith and works are necessary for salvation.*

Some sects attack the work of Christ in a different way. “Christian Science” has an entirely different idea of salvation. In the case of “The Way”, the nature of saving faith is diluted to mere mental assent.

A. Sects’ Explanations of Christ’s Death on The Cross

Mormonism: “Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf.”²⁸

Christian Science: “The real atonement—so infinitely beyond the heathen conception that God requires human blood to propitiate His justice and bring His mercy—needs to be understood. That God’s wrath should be vented upon His beloved Son, is divinely unnatural. One sacrifice, however great, is insufficient to pay the debt of sin. The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin

²⁶*Divine Principle*, p. 212; cf. DPSG, pp. 129,194, cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 30.

²⁷*Divine Principle*, p. 212; cf. DPSG, pp. 129,194, cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 30.

²⁸Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, p. 59, citing *Doctrines of Salvation*, I, 135.

when it was shed upon “the accursed tree”, than when it was flowing in his veins as he went daily about his Father’s business.”²⁹

Jehovah’s Witness: “Thus John showed the secondary purpose for which the Son of God came to earth, namely, to die as a holy sacrifice to Jehovah God in order to cancel the sins of believing men and to free them from death’s condemnation, that they might gain eternal life in the righteous new world which God has promised to create.”³⁰

The Way: “Separating the Father from the Son does not at all discredit the Son...Rather, trinitarian dogma...degrades God from his elevated, unparalleled position; besides, it leaves man unredeemed.” “If Jesus Christ is God and not the Son of God, we have not yet been redeemed.”³¹

The Unification Church: “Jesus failed in His mission. He was crucified before He could marry. It was never God’s predetermined purpose that He die.”³²

“It is equally true that the cross has been unable to establish the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth by removing our original sin.”³³

B. Sects’ Statements on the Conditions for Salvation

Mormonism: “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.” “We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”³⁴

Christian Science: “To get rid of sin through Science, is to divest sin of any supposed mind or reality, and never to admit that sin can have intelligence or power, pain or pleasure. You conquer error by denying its verity.”³⁵

²⁹*No and Yes*, p. 34, 23, 25, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 49.

³⁰Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God be True*, p. 38.

³¹Wierwille, *Jesus Christ is Not God*, book jacket, p. 6, cited in Ronald M. Enroth, *A Guide To Cults and New Religions*, p. 185.

³²DPA, pp. 64–5; *Divine Principle*, p. 143; cf. DPSG, p. 133), cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 30.

³³*Divine Principle*, p. 178, cited in Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Understanding the Cults*, p. 138.

³⁴*Articles of Faith*, p. 479, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, p. 60.

³⁵*Science and Health*, p. 339, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 51.

Jehovah's Witness: "All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God's will and then faithfully carry out their dedication will be rewarded with everlasting life."³⁶

The Way: "...now that a person is going to change lordships when he confesses with his mouth a new Lord—Jesus Christ."³⁷

"...the only visible and audible proof that a man has been born again and filled with the gift from the Holy Spirit is always that he speak in a tongue or tongues."³⁸

The Unification Church: "At this point (namely, after Jesus' death on the cross), God could claim the souls of men, but could not give redemption to the body."³⁹

"Jesus failed to redeem man physically. Therefore physical restoration is still to be accomplished by another Messiah at the Second Advent."⁴⁰

V. Eschatology: The Return of Christ and The Fate of Non-Christians

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ will return physically to rule the world ([Acts 1:11](#)). Those who reject God's provision for salvation will be held responsible for the decision they made in this life ([Hebrews 9:27](#)). They will be finally judged and condemned to eternal separation from God. Several passages indicate that this state will be conscious as well as everlasting ([Matthew 25:46](#); [II Thessalonians 1:9](#); [Revelation 14:9–11](#)).

Most of the sects deny this scriptural teaching. Some flatly teach that all people will be saved. Some teach that all people will be given another chance to believe in Christ. Others teach that unbelievers will be annihilated.

A. Sects' Positions on The Return of Christ

Christian Science: "The second appearing of Jesus is, unquestionably, the spiritual advent of the advancing idea of God, as in Christian Science."⁴¹

³⁶Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God be True*, p. 298.

³⁷Victor Paul Wierwille, *Power For Abundant Living: The Accuracy of the Bible*, New Knoxville OH (American Christian Press, 1971) pp. 296,297, cited in Walter R. Martin, *The New Cults*, p. 74.

³⁸Victor Paul Wierwille, *Receiving the Holy Spirit Today*, New Knoxville OH (American Christian Press, 1972), p. 148, cited in Walter R. Martin, *The New Cults*, p. 74.

³⁹DPSG, p. 197, cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 30.

⁴⁰DPSG, pp. 139, 165; cf. DP, pp. 147ff., cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 30.

⁴¹Mary Baker Eddy, *Retrospection and Introspection* (Boston: Trustees, 1920), p. 70, cited in Anthony A.

“It is authentically said that one expositor of Daniel’s dates fixed the year 1866 or 1867 for the return of Christ—the return of the spiritual idea to the material earth or antipode of heaven. It is a marked coincidence that those dates were the first two years of my discovery of Christian Science.”⁴²

Jehovah’s Witness: “The meaning of ‘parousia’ is more exact than the word ‘coming’ contained in the general English versions. It does not mean he is on the way or has promised to come, but that he has already arrived and is here.”⁴³

“Jesus Christ returns, not again as a human, but as a glorious spirit person.”⁴⁴

The Unification Church: “The Lord of the Second Advent is to be born on the earth as the King of Kings...We are not to expect the return of Jesus himself, but another Messiah—a man who will be born in Korea... He will be confirmed as the Messiah through the spirit world.”⁴⁵

B. Sects’ Positions on The Fate of Unbelievers

Mormonism: “We need a little more explanation as to just what we mean by unconditional redemption. That means to restore us from this mortal state to the immortal state; in other words, to give unto us the resurrection. This comes to every creature, not only to men but also to the fish, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field...All of them had spiritual existence before they were placed upon the earth; therefore they are to be redeemed.”⁴⁶

“The Sons of Perdition”, the human members of whom, according to one Mormon source, are “but a small portion of the human race,” will be permanently consigned to hell. There they are “doomed to suffer the wrath of God, with the devil and his angels, in eternity”; for their sin “there is no forgiveness in this world nor in the world to come”. Their torment will be endless, for “their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, which is their torment—and the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows.”⁴⁷

Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 62.

⁴²Mary Baker Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*. (Boston: Trustees, 1941), p. 181, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 62.

⁴³Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God Be True*, p. 198.

⁴⁴Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God Be True*, p. 196.

⁴⁵*Divine Principle*, p. 510, 500,510, 520, 177, cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 32.

⁴⁶*Doctrine of Salvation*, II, 10–11, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, p. 58.

⁴⁷Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, Grand Rapids MI (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 72,

“The Celestial Kingdom. This kingdom, which will be located on this earth after its renewal, ‘is prepared for the righteous, those who have been faithful in keeping the commandments of the Lord, and have been cleansed of all their sins.’”⁴⁸

“The Terrestrial Kingdom. This kingdom will be located on some sphere other than the earth, presumably another planet. Into this kingdom the following will go: Accountable persons who die without law...Those who reject the gospel in this life and who reverse their course and accept it in the spirit world; Honorable men of the earth who are blinded by the craftiness of men and who therefore do not accept and live the gospel law; Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints...who are not valiant, but who are instead lukewarm in their devotion to the Church and to righteousness.”⁴⁹

Christian Science: “Man’s probation after death is the necessity of his immortality; for good dies not and evil is self-destructive, therefore evil must be mortal and self-destroyed. If man should not progress after death, but should remain in error, he would be inevitably self-annihilated.”⁵⁰

Jehovah’s Witness: “The doctrine of a burning hell where the wicked are tortured eternally after death cannot be true, mainly for four reasons: (1) It is wholly unscriptural; (2) It is unreasonable; (3) It is contrary to God’s love, and (4) It is repugnant to justice.”⁵¹

The Unification Church: “When he declares the Kingdom, the life spirits of those who have lived before will join the followers of Rev. Moon so that they can develop into divine spirits. Evil people will go through a similar reincarnation procedure. The law of Karma is operative in this procedure, for, ‘...if any arrive in the spirit world with unpaid debts, they will have to work to assist perhaps the very ones they hurt in order to pay what they owe.’”⁵²

referring to *Doctrine and Covenants* 76:33,34;76:44, 45.

⁴⁸ Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions*, II, 208, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, p. 72.

⁴⁹ Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Salt Lake City (Bookcraft Publishers, 1958) p. 708. Reference is made to *Doctrine and Covenants* 76:71–80. Compare Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ *Miscellaneous Writings*, p.2, cited in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Christian Science*, p. 60.

⁵¹ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, *Let God be True*, p. 99.

⁵² *DPSG*, pp. 174ff; cf. *DP*, pp. 157ff, *DPA*, p. 50, cited in James Bjornstad, *Sun Myung and the Unification Church*, p. 33.

VI. Communication Guidelines

It is not enough for the Christian to be able to discern false doctrine and defend true doctrine.

It is also necessary to be able to discuss these issues in a way that helps the other person to come to the truth.

The following guidelines have been found to be important considerations for the Christian discussing the sects.

A. Treat the other person with love and respect.

One of the most common mistakes in dealing with sect-members is to regard them as the enemy to be defeated. It is imperative to remember that it is the thought system itself, not the adherent to it, that is to be defeated ([II Corinthians 10:3–5](#)). The person involved in the sect is to be rescued from the false system ([Jude 22, 23](#)). A sincere attitude of love and respect for the person is necessary for this to happen. Avoid heated argumentation and any form of abusive speech.

B. Stay focused on essential doctrines.

The focus should stay on the essential doctrines of Scripture and how the teaching of the sect denies them. Avoid getting into many of the particulars of the sect. They may be interesting, but tend to move the focus of the discussion away from essential scriptural doctrine.

C. Avoid attacking the founder or history of the sect.

This kind of argumentation is fallacious: the behavior of the followers can neither verify nor falsify the sect's doctrines. Christianity would fall prey to the same kind of attack, as any experienced sect member will be quick to point out!

D. Be prepared to ask specific and repeated questions about the sect's stand on essential doctrines.

Some sects school their people to avoid discussing concrete areas of doctrine. When this is the case, the Christian should insist that a clear answer be given to the doctrine in question.

E. Be prepared to discuss hermeneutics.

Sect members are usually aware of the biblical passages which contradict their doctrines as well as the ones which supposedly support them. Because of this fact, the discussion will often center around the interpretation of the given texts. The Christian should be able to defend

his interpretation of texts which support essential doctrines, and refute the wrong interpretation of the texts used by the sect member.

F. Respond to people according their degree of openness.

It is unwise to have the same immediate goals for all people involved in a sect. Several factors should be considered in forming a realistic goal for the discussion:

Is the person a highly committed sect member, perhaps engaged in evangelism? The greater his commitment, the less probable that any significant change of mind will be seen in one discussion. It is usually best in this situation to give a clear and strong defense of the Christian position, coupled with an exposure of the key weak areas of the sect's doctrine. If there is no willingness to deal honestly with the passages brought up, it is best to politely end the discussion.

If the person is a "second-generation" member, a greater degree of openness may be present. Stress the grace of God with this person.

If the person is not a sect member, or if he / she is a new member, a high degree of openness is often present. The person is usually interested in spiritual things and the Bible, but has perhaps had exposure only to sect doctrine and/or Christian doctrine without proper defense. Stress the deity of Christ and the grace of God with this person, and show how the sect has misinterpreted passages to support its position.

About the Authors and this Article

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The RAS editorial team has made minor editing and format changes which have not altered the authors' original intent, contents, and conclusions.

LET YOUR CONSCIENCE BE YOUR GUIDE: THE PROBLEM WITH JIMINY CRICKET ETHICS

By Tal Davis

*“When you get in trouble and you don’t know right from wrong,
Give a little whistle! Give a little whistle!
When you meet temptation and the urge is very strong,
Give a little whistle! Give a little whistle!
Not just a little squeak, Pucker up and blow.
And if your whistle’s weak, yell “Jiminy Cricket!”
Take the straight and narrow path And if you start to slide,
Give a little whistle! Give a little whistle!
And always let your conscience be your guide!
And always let your conscience be your guide!”¹*

Know that song? Sure you do. It is titled “Give a Little Whistle!” It’s the tune Jiminy Cricket taught Pinocchio in Walt Disney’s classic animated movie of that name. Jiminy sat on Pinocchio’s shoulder the way the beautiful Blue Fairy told him to do. So, when the wooden marionette boy faced a temptation to do wrong the umbrella carrying cricket would whisper in his ear, tell him to whistle, and to “always let your conscience be your guide!”

That sounds like pretty good advice. I am sure that Disney and the writers of the 1940 movie wanted to use it as an opportunity to teach their young viewers a valuable moral lesson. Remember, when Pinocchio did not do what his conscience (Jiminy Cricket) said, he began to turn into a donkey. It was not until he started obeying that he turned into a “real boy.”

Even today, most people rely on their consciences to help them determine the right or wrong in a given situation. The main presupposition is that we can determine what is good or bad by relying on our feelings.² That ethical system, which I call “Jiminy Cricket Ethics,” is strongly advocated by modern naturalistic and postmodern ethicists. It basically asserts that we can and should do whatever our feelings say is right.

With all due respect to the Blue Fairy, Jiminy Cricket, and Walt Disney, from a Christian Worldview perspective, that ethical system has at least two major flaws. First, as history and psychology have clearly shown, people’s consciences are easily manipulated and altered. Yes,

¹ Give a Little Whistle, Songwriters: Ned Washington / Leigh Harline.

² RAS editorial note: This is reflected in the popular slogan, “If it feels good, do it.”

the Apostle Paul did tell the Romans that everyone has an ingrained consciousness of God and possesses some kind of conscience:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, being understood by what has been made, so that they are without excuse” ([Romans 1:18–20 NASB](#)).

“In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them” ([Romans 2:15 NASB](#)).

However Paul reminded them that peoples’ inward moral compasses can decay and be seared by false concepts about God and His will:

“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their reasonings, and their senseless hearts [i.e. consciences] were darkened” ([Romans 1:21 NASB](#)).

“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron” ([1 Timothy 4:1–2 NASB](#)).

He likewise told Titus:

“To the pure, everything is pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; in fact, both their mind and conscience are defiled” ([Titus 1:15 NASB](#)).

Recent world history provided ample evidence for this fact. Nazis in Germany, communists in the USSR and in China, and other murderous despots in the 20th century, had no qualms about killing literally tens of millions of innocent lives. The most recent examples are Russia (in Ukraine), North Korea, and modern China.

The leaders of those nations, and their brainwashed followers, have their consciences seared by repeated evil actions or have convinced themselves that whatever they do in the name of their ideologies is

always right. For them, the ends justify the means. The point is, people's consciences are not reliable bases for deciding what is right or wrong. In fact, some people, sociopaths and psychopaths, have no consciences at all. They only do what they want to do or can get away with. They simply have no cricket sitting on their shoulders to listen to.

The other problem with this "conscience navigated" morality is that it has no absolute basis for knowing right and wrong. It is based only on what one feels or what societal mores are dominant at any certain time and place. This ethical perspective is relative and is constantly changing with the consensus in the society.

Thus, people's consciences change with the times. What they believe is wrong now will be different in the future. One modern illustration in America is the issue of same-sex marriage. In 2004 only 31% of American adults favored legalizing same-sex marriages. However, on June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States, in a 5–4 ruling in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case, declared that any and all laws not recognizing same-sex marriage, passed at any governmental level, are unconstitutional. Consequently, by 2017, the percentage in favor of same-sex marriages had doubled to 62%. In 2022 it rose to over 70%. This is a perfect example of how peoples' moral attitudes can be quickly changed by the influences of the mass media and the malleable standards of civil law.

So we must ask, what is the right basis for our moral decisions? The Christian worldview maintains that ethical determinations are grounded in the character of God Himself. They must be founded on the unchanging divine principles revealed by Him in the Word of God – the Bible. The Scriptures provide clear and absolute precepts for what is right and wrong, regardless of the situation or the mores and laws of secular society. The Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments, and the moral writings of the New Testament apostles (Paul, Peter, John, etc.) are, for the believer in Christ, the basis for all ethical choices.

Of course, the ultimate guide for moral practices is the Lord Jesus Himself. His teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, His parables, and His various messages to His disciples, are the immutable words of God Himself. Jesus' prime directive is that God's love is the key to right behavior. Remember what He said are the two greatest commandments:

"YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

AS YOURSELF' Upon these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets" ([Matthew 22:36–40 NASB](#)).

Finally, we must not forget that our ability to do what is right and good is impossible on our own. We must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit living in us to empower us to avoid sin and to do good:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness” ([Galatians 5:22 NASB](#)).

All that being said, we know we cannot live a perfectly moral and ethical life. We are sinners. That is why we must trust in the grace of God for maintaining our relationship with Him. When we fail to live up to God's standards we should admit it to Him and to ourselves and seek His forgiveness. As the Apostle John states:

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10 NASB).

So, in summary, no one has a Jiminy Cricket sitting on his or her shoulder to whistle up when they need moral guidance. And our conscience is not really adequate. Only God, His Word, and His Holy Spirit can truly provide our righteous ethical and moral compass.³

Reprinted from Worldview Made Practical; a free e-zine produced by Market-Faith Ministries featuring practical teaching and life tools to help Christians become more effective in their faith life. Discover MarketFaith Ministries at www.marketfaith.org.

³ RAS Note: This is not to suggest that the conscience is not useful. Like a dull knife that needs to be sharpened, so our conscience must constantly be sharpened by the word of God. As the Christian remains in daily communion with God through Bible reading and prayer, the conscience becomes a more reliable guide.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN QUIZ

1. Of the four New Testament Gospels, when was John written?
 - a. First
 - b. Second
 - c. Third
 - d. Fourth
2. The traditional author of the Gospel of John is:
 - a. John the Baptist
 - b. The Apostle John
 - c. John the Elder
 - d. John Mellencamp
3. Which is *not true* of John's gospel?
 - a. It is the only gospel with a prologue describing the preexistence of Christ.
 - b. It has the longest description of the Last Supper
 - c. It describes in detail the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene
 - d. It alone describes the Transfiguration of Jesus
4. This leader of the Jews came to Jesus secretly by night:
 - a. The High Priest Caiaphas
 - b. Philo of Alexandria
 - c. Nicodemus
 - d. Nicolodean
5. Which is *not true* of Jesus' discourse in John Chapter 6?
 - a. Jesus said He was the bread of life
 - b. Unless one ate his flesh and drank His blood Jesus said they could not have life
 - c. After hearing this discourse, many disciples of Jesus abandoned him
 - d. Jesus illustrated His teaching by turning a stone into a loaf of bread
6. Which metaphor was *not used* by Jesus to describe Himself in the Gospel of John?
 - a. I am the vine

- b. I am a protective mother bear
 - c. I am the light of the world
 - d. I am the good shepherd
7. Which is *not true* of Jesus when He healed the blind man in John Chapter 9?
- a. The man had been blinded by the Pharisees for violating Mosaic Law
 - b. Jesus healed the blind man's eyes with an ointment of mud mixed with His saliva
 - c. The blind man's parents were called in to testify against their son
 - d. Jesus used this healing to illustrate the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees
8. Which is *not true* when Jesus healed Lazarus in John Chapter 11?
- a. Upon hearing Lazarus was sick, Jesus purposely stayed away until Lazarus died
 - b. Jesus declared to Martha and Mary "I am the resurrection and the life."
 - c. Jesus told His inner circle He wasn't sure He could raise Lazarus from the dead
 - d. Raising Lazarus from the dead prompted the Jewish leadership to plot Jesus' death
9. Which is *not true* of John's description of the Last Supper (John Chapters 13–17)?
- a. Jesus washed the disciples' feet to teach humility and service
 - b. Jesus turned a clay bird into a living bird to teach the disciples faith
 - c. Jesus predicted Peter would betray Him before the break of dawn
 - d. Jesus instituted the communion ceremony (Lord's Supper)
10. Which is *not true* of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ?
- a. Jesus was crucified between two guilty criminals
 - b. Jesus nailed his own feet to the cross as an example of sacrifice
 - c. Before passing away, Jesus cried "It is finished!"
 - d. To ensure Jesus was dead, a soldier pierced His side with a spear

Answers:

1d 2b 3d 4c 5d 6b 7a 8c 9b 10b

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