

WOLVES AMONG US

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INTRODUCTION

The world is one big battle ground. Many nations are involved in bitter struggle with each other and the political stakes are high. There is, however, a war which is even fiercer with much higher stakes. This war is a vicious spiritual battle for the human mind and heart. While the outcome of national wars has temporary political and economical consequences, the battle for the human mind and heart will have eternal consequences. St. Paul writes that our struggle is not with flesh and blood, that is, with humans, but we (Christians) are at war with the evil powers of the spiritual world (Eph. 6:12). There are many who claim to be of God, but they in fact teach distorted doctrines which are contrary and even opposed to our Christian faith. Such false teachers are described as "wolves" by our Lord Jesus Christ: "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravening *wolves*" (Matt. 7:15).

In the United States, in Armenia and all over the world, trained members of cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons work day and night, using all manner of deceit in order to make converts. Many of these converts are former Church members who did not know much about their faith, and consequently, succumbed to the false teachings of the cults. *A cult is any religious group which differs significantly in certain respects from the traditional teachings of the Christian faith as taught by the Church. Usually, a cult is centered upon the false Biblical teachings of certain people, or on the claims of certain people such as the Rev. Moon of the Unification Church, who has presented himself as the Christ of the 20th century, and to whom the cult members display intense devotion.*

The purpose of this booklet is to inform and warn the reader, especially in Armenia and abroad, concerning the origin and false teachings of some of the more well-known cults and to point out the correct Biblical teaching according to the understanding of our Armenian Church Fathers.

*(In order to prevent repetition in our response to the anti-Christian teachings of the cults having to do with God and the Person of Jesus Christ, it has been placed in the latter portion of the booklet which is entitled, *The Christian Perspective*).

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

One of the most well-known, as well as militant cults is the Jehovah's Witnesses. Many people have had their homes visited by a pair of Witnesses. Those who are somewhat familiar with this group realize their hatred of traditional Christianity and the Church. Any Christian doctrine which is not compatible with their teachings is considered as "satanic" in origin and therefore false. Very tragic family breakups and tensions have occurred to families in which one or more of the members have become a Jehovah's Witness.

A brief history: The founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses was a man named Charles Taze Russell, who was born on February 16, 1852 in Columbus, Ohio. From his youth, Russell was disturbed and frightened by various teachings of a certain Protestant denomination, and from that experience, he grew to despise and reject all "organized religions". This extreme dislike of traditional Christian Churches by the Jehovah's Witnesses is still evident to this day. At the age of 18, the young Russell organized a religious study group and eventually became "pastor" of that group. In time Russell founded a publication, *The Herald of the Morning*, which developed into the well known Jehovah's Witness publication, *The Watchtower*, with another publication as well called *Awake*. And presently, more than 15,000,000 copies of each publication are produced monthly in dozens of languages, including Armenian. It is well known that Russell preached that those who did not accept the "aid" of his studies would go "into darkness".

Until July 26, 1931, this group was known as "Russellites" or "Watchtower People". But in 1931, during a convention in Ohio, the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" was adopted at the prompting of their new leader, "Judge" Joseph F. Rutherford. It is interesting as well as important to realize that this name is based on the Biblical passage of Isaiah 43: 10-12. They identified themselves as the true people of "Jehovah" which is the Old Testament reference to God. What the Jehovah's Witnesses fail to realize is the fact that this name, "Jehovah", is not found in the Bible manuscripts, but it appeared in English Bibles in the 13th century. In the ancient manuscripts we only have the letters "YHWH" in reference to God, because the Jews believed that it was not possible to know the name of God. So then, the next time someone tells you that he is a witness of Jehovah, ask him, "What was God's name before the 13th century?" - they don't know. A more recent leader of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Nathan H. Knorr, produced a translation of the Bible which is used by the Jehovah's Witnesses. This translation, known as *The New World Translation*, differs significantly from the Christian Bible, and was custom made in order to cater to their peculiar doctrines.

MAJOR DOCTRINES OF THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

1. They deny the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. They cannot accept the fact that although there is only one God and one essence, three distinct Persons share in it equally - God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that "Satan is the originator of the trinity doctrine" (*Let God be True*, Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946 ed., p. 101).

2. They deny the deity of Jesus Christ. They teach that Jesus Christ is not God, but chief of the angels, simply a creation of God (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. V, p.84).

3. They deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. According to the Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus Christ is forever dead, and He never literally came back to life from the grave. St. Paul says, however, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" - I Cor. 15:14.

4. They deny the physical and visible return of Jesus Christ. They teach "that human eyes will not see him at his second coming, neither will he come in a fleshly body" (*The Truth Shall Make You Free*, p. 295). But the hope of every true Christian is to experience the return of our Lord as King of kings.

5. They deny the deity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is simply regarded as the influence, or the power of God, and not as one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

6. They deny the existence of hell and eternal punishment. The Word of God says, however, that "if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" - Revelation 20:15; it is an eternal punishment - see Matthew 25:41-46.

7. They deny that people have eternal souls. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that the devil originated the belief that the human soul is immortal (lives forever).

8. THEY DENY JESUS CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF OUR SALVATION - THEY TEACH THAT SALVATION ONLY COMES AS A RESULT OF BEING A FAITHFUL JEHOVAH'S WITNESS.

9. They deny that all believers will go to heaven. They take a reference to 144,000 saints referred to in Revelation 14:1-5 out of context, and claim that 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses will go to heaven, and all the other Jehovah's Witnesses will live on earth forever.

In addition to their distorted teachings of Scripture, the Jehovah's Witnesses have also proved themselves to be **false prophets**. For example, in 1916 they predicted that a new age of peace would begin on earth with the conclusion of World War I. It was also predicted that the Battle of Armageddon would take place in 1940 or 1941. And in more recent times, it was predicted that 1,000 years of peace would begin on earth starting in the Fall of 1975. Our Lord however, warned us to beware of those who make such predictions (Luke 21:8).

Two other notable points which must be mentioned are the fact that the Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate Christmas since the celebration of Christmas glorifies Christ, and the cults always work to degrade the Person of Christ. It should also be noted that the Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions for themselves and their children - even though many have died in emergency cases. They base their refusal of blood transfusions on a very distorted interpretation of God's law forbidding the ancient Jews to *eat blood* (Leviticus 17: 10-14).

MORMONS - THE LATTER DAY SAINTS

The Mormons, who prefer to be known as The Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ, are another cult founded upon American soil in the last century. In America the Mormon missionaries are a common sight. Neatly dressed and riding on bicycles, they are highly trained young men who ring doorbells and begin to tell anyone who is willing to listen that the Christian Churches are wrong, that the Church doctrines are an abomination, and that Christian priests and pastors are corrupt. Then, in a most convincing manner, these seemingly angelic and polite young men begin to preach Mormonism to the potential convert.

A brief history: The founder of the Mormon cult was a controversial man named Joseph Smith, Jr. who was born in Vermont, on December 25, 1805. Young Joseph, who was known simply as "Joe" by his neighbors, had an abnormal fascination with stories about the famous sea pirate, Captain Kidd, and rumors about hidden treasures left by that sea captain. Consequently, Joe was constantly digging throughout the countryside looking for buried treasure. Apparently Joseph and his family never found the fabled treasure of Captain Kidd, but "innumerable craters in the Vermont and New York countryside testify to their apparent zeal..." (Martin, Walter, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Minnesota: Bethany House Pub., 1985, p.170). This unsuccessful treasure hunter is now known as the "Prophet" by millions of Mormons.

Out of disappointment, Joseph resorted to counterfeiting money in order to obtain the illusive wealth. The United States government was not very sympathetic to his method of becoming financially wealthy and therefore, he got into trouble with the law. A contemporary of Joseph Smith, E. D. Howe, did extensive research into the life of Joseph; and a statement which he obtained from Smith's neighbors in Palmyra, New York reveals the character of this so called "Prophet". Sixty-two residents of Palmyra testified and signed a statement which described the Smith family, and in particular, Joseph and his father, as "entirely destitute of moral character, and addicted to vicious habits" (*Mormonism Unveiled*, Zanesville, Ohio, 1834, p. 261). Interestingly enough, there are no existing favorable statements about him from the early days of Joseph Smith (*The Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 175).

In 1820, Joseph claimed to receive a vision from heaven by which it was revealed that he was to be a new prophet. Later in 1823, Joseph saw another "vision" which supposedly involved the appearance of an angel named Moroni. This angel in turn revealed the location of "golden plates" which Joseph claims to have contained additional Scripture from God. Out of the golden plates fiasco, came the *Book of Mormon*, which allegedly contains additional Scripture not found in the Bible. Among the "revelations" received by the new prophet is the teaching that thousands of years ago, a Middle Eastern civilization migrated to America and that Jesus Christ appeared to them and preached to them after His resurrection.

One of the teachings of Joseph Smith helped bring about his violent death. As the early Mormons grew in number and prospered in Nauvoo, Illinois, he taught and encouraged polygamy (having more than one wife). This angered the local non-Mormon residents so much, especially when a former assistant of his, named John C. Bennett,

exposed the practice of polygamy. The displeasure of Mormonism became so great that an anti-Mormon publication - *The Nauvoo Expositor* - came into being. Joseph Smith, "The General", as he liked to be known during this time, led an attack of *The Nauvoo Expositor* press and destroyed it. He and his brother were placed in jail by the United States government for their part in the attack (*The Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 175). However, on June 27, 1844, a large mob of angry people forcibly took Joseph Smith and his brother out of the jail and brutally murdered them, but in the process, the angry mob unwittingly produced a great "martyr" which greatly helped propagate Mormonism.

After Joseph's death, many people claimed the right to lead the group, but most followed a man named Brigham Young. Brigham Young was enormously successful in greatly strengthening the Mormon foundation and its internal organization and financial growth. For example, it is estimated that the Mormon cult currently has an income in excess of \$3,000,000 *per day*. Like his "Prophet" (Smith), Brigham Young also had "vicious habits". For example, he was largely responsible, on September 1, 1857, for organizing the wholesale massacre and robbery of 127 men, women and children who were traveling from Arkansas and Missouri to California (*Mormonism, Mama & Me*, Calvary Missionary Press., P.O. Box 13532, Tucson, Ariz.).

MAJOR MORMON DOCTRINES

1. The Mormons teach that God is an exalted man. In other words, God used to be like one of us. They claim that Adam (the first man) is our father and our God: "The Father (God) has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (*Doctrine & Covenants* 130:22).

2. They reject the historical Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

3. They teach that Jesus and Satan are spiritual brothers. What a blasphemy and insult this is to Christians!

4. Mormons teach that Jesus Christ is dead, that He was not raised from the dead, and that His human existence ended on the cross. They very cleverly teach that although Jesus is the Son of God, that He is not God, but a created being who was the arch-angel Michael before He came into our world.

5. They also deny the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit. Mormons teach that the Holy Spirit is simply an influence, or the power exercised by God. But our Lord referred to the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter" and "Counselor", and He promised that "the Holy Spirit will guide you (Christians) into all the truth" - John 16 :13.

6. They deny the authority of the Bible as Holy Scripture, but claim that *The Book of Mormon*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, and *Doctrines and Covenants* [of the Mormons] contain additional revelations of God.

These books however, especially *The Book of Mormon*, contain so many contradictions, errors and plagiarism. For example, "According to a careful survey of the *Book of Mormon*, it contains at least 25,000 words from the King James Bible." In fact,

"verbatim quotations, some of considerable length, have caused the Mormons no end of embarrassment for many years" (*Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 187).

7. Mormons teach that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is not sufficient for the forgiveness of our sins, but that only obedience to the Mormon rituals and obedience to the requirements of the Mormon Church will save a person's soul.

8. It is taught that the obedient baptized Mormon male will become a god!

9. The Mormons practice baptism for the dead by proxy.

Mormons attract many people due to their nice manners, their emphasis on education and their stress on good health habits. But they will not tell the potential convert about their secret temple ceremonies which involve the use of secret names, signs and words which one must know in order to attain godhood. Their secret temple ceremonies include baptism and the wearing of "magical underwear" which must always be worn. It should also be mentioned that those who are baptized must take a blood oath to never reveal the secret rituals and ceremonies. For example, in one of the oaths, they promise that if they should reveal the "secrets", they will have their "throats cut from ear to ear and our tongues torn out by their roots" (*Temple Mormonism* p. 18). In short, their rituals and temple ceremonies are seeped in occultic practices. Before he died, Joseph Smith established and patterned much of the Mormon Temple ceremonies and rituals after those of the Freemasons.

CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST

The 19th century was a good century for the formation of cults in America, along with their leaders who likened themselves to Jesus Christ. The Christian Scientists are no exception. The founder of this cult was a woman by the name of Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910). This financially wealthy cult is best known for its publication, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and their numerous "reading rooms" found all over the country which are centers containing literature for the propagation of this cult.

A brief history: Mary Baker Eddy, the "Discoverer and Founder" of Christian Science, was born in Bow, New Hampshire, in 1821 in a farm house. From her youth, she suffered illnesses which were both physical and emotional. At 22 years of age, she married her first husband, but he soon died due to yellow fever. This experience left her highly unstable emotionally. Ten years later she married again against the advice of her father, and that marriage ended in disaster with Mary's claim that her husband had abandoned her.

When she was 56 years old, her third and last marriage was to Mr. Asa Eddy, in 1877. During this time her religious teachings and activities began to flourish, along with many followers. In 1879 the first "Church of Christ Scientist" was established in Boston, Mass. Among the teachings of this new cult was the idea that sin and sickness are simply

illusions of the mind and that mental healing was possible for all sicknesses.

After Mr. Asa died, the events which followed show the extreme mental instability of the so-called discoverer and founder of "Christian" Science. The cause of Asa's death was a coronary thrombosis (*The Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 127). Mrs. Eddy, however, did not accept the autopsy report because it hurt her pride - after all, she was supposed to be a great healer. She therefore had her physician, Dr. Eastman, conduct a separate autopsy. The report confirmed Mrs. Eddy's conviction that her husband Asa, had died of "arsenic poisoning mentally administered" (*The Boston Post*, June 5, 1882). This preposterous report resulted in an investigation of Dr. Eastman, who was Dean of the Bellvue Medical College. The investigation revealed that Dr. Eastman had no qualifications to be a doctor and his "medical college" was actually an abortion center. Consequently, he was sentenced to ten years in prison, and the Bellvue Medical College was shut down.

Another part of Mary's life which modern day Christian Scientists do not like to discuss is her relationship with Dr. Quimby. Mrs. Eddy had suffered from spinal inflammation and her ailment was reportedly healed by him. Dr. Quimby practiced a system of "mental healing" which he described as "The Science of Man", and also "The Science of Christ", and "Christian Science". Years later, Mrs. Eddy intentionally discredited this man and described him as very ignorant. This was a cover-up in her scheme to steal Dr. Quimby's ideas and plagiarize much of his writings. Mrs. Eddy denied all this, and claimed that she was inspired in her writings by Almighty God (*Christian Science Journal*, January, 1901).

CHRISTIAN SCIENTIST - MAJOR DOCTRINES

1. The Christian Scientists deny the Christian teachings about God. They deny the Personality of God and the Holy Trinity. For them, God is an impersonal being, in some way like the Hindus' Brahman. God is thought of as the "Divine Mind". In other words, God consists of the ideas we have about love, truth, spirit, life, soul... Christian Scientists also teach that we humans are the expression of God. This however, is the sin of Satan, because he also desired to be God, and consequently was thrown out of heaven, out of the presence of God.

2. They deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Christian Scientist cleverly say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but that "Jesus Christ *was not* God".

3. They deny the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Christian Scientists teach that Mary, the mother of Jesus, simply conceived the *idea* of God.

4. They degrade the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross by denying its power to save us from sin. From Mrs. Eddy's own publication we read: "The material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin 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" (*Science and Health*, 1875). They deny the reality of sin and claim that people cannot sin. But the Bible warns us that if we deny that we have sinned, we make a liar out of God (I John 1:10), and the penalty for unforgiven sin is eternal death.

5. The Christian Scientists are also guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, whom they deny as a Person of the Holy Trinity. This cult has the audacity to claim that the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised to send to the believers is none other than the *knowledge* of Christian Science as taught by Mary Baker Eddy!

6. Christian Scientists teach that physical matter is simply an "unreal illusion subject to decay..." therefore, since "evil has to do with matter", it also is "unreal, an Illusion" (Rosten, Leo, *Religions in America*, Simon and Schuster, New York. 1963, p.39). They also believe that there is no final judgment and that hell is just in the thinking of insane and unreasonable people. Christian Scientists obviously do not regard the warning of our Lord Jesus Christ who warned of coming judgment and the punishment of the wicked who "will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12).

Christian Scientists are very careful and go to great lengths to claim that they truly are Christians and that they are one of the Protestant denominations, and emphasize that their teachings are based entirely upon the teachings of Jesus Christ; but they are in reality, anything but Christian.

Rev. Sun Myung Moon & the UNIFICATION CHURCH

The followers of Rev. Moon's Unification Church are known as **MOONIES** by most people. This cult makes a special effort to appeal to young educated people, and to do so, it uses many devious tactics - even through the employing of unsuspecting young people in a variety of businesses the cult owns. As far as its doctrines go, the Unification Church is simply an Eastern religion which has been westernized. The Moonies take great pain to convince outsiders and potential converts that its Eastern religious teachings are compatible with the Christian doctrines. Having taken advantage of the disastrous earthquake situation in Armenia, along with the political and religious freedoms, the Moonies have been working very hard to make converts in our homeland.

A brief history: It is interesting to realize that Moon's parents were Christians. He was born on January 6, 1920 in North Korea, and was named Yong Myung Moon, which means "Shinning Dragon Moon". When he was ten years old his family joined the Presbyterian Church; however, from an early age, Moon became involved with occultic practices. Rev. Moon claims to have had a vision at the age of 16. He says that Jesus Christ appeared to him in that vision and explained that the world would be changed through him (Moon). Rev. Moon even claims that Buddha and Mohammed also confirmed this mission he was to fulfill. Later in 1945, after studying at a monastery, Moon claimed to receive a revelation by which he was to establish his Unification Church. At this time Moon declared himself to be the savior of the world. Not long after, as a befitting name for himself - since, after all, he is the new savior of the world - he changed his name to "Sun Myung Moon" which means, "Shinning Sun and Moon".

Moon was put in prison in North Korea by the Communists. Although Moon claims that he was imprisoned for his faith, the communist authorities blamed him for unlawful money-making schemes and for adultery. Later Moon moved to Seoul, South Korea and officially founded the Unification Church in May, 1954. In 1955, he was arrested by South Korean officials on charges of draft evasion and sexual promiscuity, but the charges were later dropped. However, a former member of his church explains that the Rev. Moon would engage in sex with the female members of his church under the pretense of "purifying" them of the original sin, since original sin first came through woman - Eve (Bjornstad, James, *The Moon Is Not the Sun*, Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1976, p. 31).

The first Moonie missionary was sent to the United States in 1959 and this cult gradually grew in numbers and in wealth. During the 1970's the Moonies gained much publicity and notoriety due to their money making methods and business ventures. Today this cult owns thousands of acres in the United States valued in the millions of dollars. A 255 acre estate near the Hudson River in Barrytown, N.Y. houses a Unification Church seminary. The 42 story New Yorker Hotel in New York City is also a property of this cult. In addition, they own many fishing businesses on the east coast of the United States and in Louisiana. And as if that wasn't enough, the Moonies also own the *New York Tribune* and the *Washington Times* newspapers (*The Unification Church*. Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 15081, Santa Ana, CA).

MAJOR DOCTRINES OF THE UNIFICATION CHURCH

1. This cult denies the Christian teachings about God and the Holy Trinity. Moon's church teaches an Eastern religious view of God. It is taught that God the Father is a composite of opposites as is taught in the Oriental philosophy of Taoism.
2. The Moonies teach that the Bible is not to be trusted, but that Rev. Moon's book, *The Divine Principle*, is superior to it. But we Christian Armenians regard the Bible as "The Breath of God". We believe it is inspired by God Himself, as we read in II Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is inspired by God...".
3. Rev. Moon teaches that Lucifer (Satan) had a sexual relation with Eve, who in turn had a relation with Adam; and in that way, sin was brought upon the entire human race. (Rev. Moon used such distorted theology in order to justify adulterous relations with many of his female converts under the pretense of "purifying" them - since sin first came through woman).
4. This cult actually claims that our Lord Jesus Christ failed in His mission because He died on the cross and did not have enough time to complete His work. The Moonies explain that since Jesus died on the cross before he had the opportunity to get married, Jesus was not able to produce perfect offspring. Rev. Moon claims that although Christ's death on the cross achieved our spiritual salvation, only devotion to him and his wife (Mrs. Moon) can bring about "physical salvation".

This is completely contrary to our Christian teachings. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the **ONLY** Savior. Jesus said, in no uncertain terms: "I Am the Way, the Truth and the

Life..." (John 14:6). Salvation through Jesus Christ is for both the body and soul. All believers in Christ Jesus will experience bodily resurrection from their graves as He did. See I Thessalonians 4:13-16.

5. They deny that Jesus Christ is God, but teach that He is only an exalted man. The theology of this cult is very deceiving in that they will seem to agree with the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is God, but *only in the sense that any "perfect" man (as Jesus was) "is one body with God" (Divine Principle, p. 209).* In other words, anyone who becomes a "perfect" human through the Unification Church will be as God.

6. This cult does not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. This is in opposition to our Christian faith. The disciples of Christ saw His resurrected body after the Resurrection - see John 20:24-29. In the Creed of the Armenian Apostolic Church we read, in regard to Jesus: "He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended to heaven *with the same body* and sat at the right hand of the Father".

7. The deity and the personality of the Holy Spirit is denied. This cult teaches that the Holy Spirit is not God, but rather a female force that compliments Jesus.

Those who come into contact with Moonies, the members of the Unification Church, must beware of their very clever teachings which can initially seem intellectually appealing, especially to young people who are not properly educated in their Christian doctrines. The Moonies are highly trained and put much pressure on their own members in order to make converts and stay within the bounds of the Unification "Church".

Rev. Moon engages in occultic (satanic) practices and he encourages his followers to do the same. For example, Rev. Moon once participated in a seance conducted by the spirit medium Arthur Ford in order to contact spirits of the dead, and Unification Church literature reports occultic practices which took place during church activities (*The Unification Church*). Rev. Moon tells his followers that they will see him when they pray, and he goes so far as to call these appearances the work of God. In short, anyone who comes into contact with members of the Unification Church should stay away from these dangerous people.

EASTERN RELIGIOUS CULTS

Many Eastern religious cults have made inroads into American society, especially by way of Yoga and Transcendental Meditation. Recently, Armenia was also invaded by missionaries of such cults who are preaching their anti-Christian teachings and passing out their literature which has been translated into the Armenian language. By various methods, they are gaining some converts among our people. Some young Armenian students are even being converted by promises of going to the United States to receive an

education at a college or a university which is operated by these cults. The teachings of the Eastern religious cults, such as the **Hari Krishnas**, the practitioners of **Transcendental Meditation** and **Yoga**, including Rev. Moon's **Unification Church**, and literally **hundreds of other Eastern cults**, originate mostly in Hindu, and also Buddhist religious thoughts.

HINDUISM is one of the oldest religions in the world. Hinduism is difficult to describe in a very concise manner because it has many different schools of thought among its members. There is no single idea or teaching about God. For example, some Hindus see the concept of God as monism which means that all existence is one substance. Others understand God as pantheism, which is the idea that the entire universe - all existence - is divine, including you and me and the trees, rocks, etc. Still, there are a number other concepts of God, none of which are compatible with our Christian teachings. Many Hindus believe that Brahman is the one, absolute, supreme soul of the universe. Brahman is not looked upon as a divine personality, but as an impersonal force. In the Hindu religion, there are countless gods, but according to their perception of reality, even these "gods" are illusions. There is a god for wealth, a god for wisdom, a god for travelling, etc. - there is a god for everything. This makes Hinduism an essentially atheistic religion.

Fundamental to Hindu thought is the idea of reincarnation. Reincarnation refers to the possession of human and animal bodies, and plants, by the soul. Hinduism teaches that the soul, which is eternal, is accountable for its own actions throughout time; and each successive reincarnation is a step towards "salvation". It is thought that the soul passes from one reincarnation to another until it becomes pure enough to be reunited with Brahman. When the soul achieves this union with Brahman, it is then liberated from the countless cycles of birth and death. Basically, the goal of Hinduism is freedom from the cycle of reincarnation - that is, to "find the real self". To the Hindu, to find one's "real self" is equated with finding God - in other words, every person is divine, is God, and this is known through "self realization". As Christians however, we believe in the resurrection of souls, not in continuous reincarnations. And we believe that we are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27), but we are not to sin by claiming to be equal to God. Someday all the dead will be resurrected (not reincarnated) in order to be judged by God - John 5:24-30. The teaching of reincarnation is also clearly denied by the following verse from Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment".

BUDDHISM is an obviously atheistic religion since Buddhists do not believe in a Supreme Being or in God, but rather that we are divine in ourselves (as do the Hindus). The greatest "sin" is ignorance of this fact (of "self-realization"). *Both Hinduism and Buddhism are essentially teaching self worship - that is to worship one's self - this is the same sin for which Lucifer (Satan) was thrown out of heaven by God and condemned to hell.* This religion teaches that all existence in the universe is one substance, and that we are a part of that substance. Humans are not personalities, there is no individual self, but we are simply a bundle of sensations, energy, thoughts and feelings. Buddhists believe that the desire for pleasure is the cause of all sorrow and disappointment, and therefore, selfish desires must be destroyed; and in that way one will eventually reach the state of

nirvana - the state of "pure enlightenment and bliss".

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The outstanding feature of these religions is the fact that "salvation" is achieved solely through human effort and enlightenment (self-realization). There is no personal tie with a personal God, the Heavenly Father who loves and cares for His children. God for them is an impersonal force at best, and therefore has no dealings with us and human affairs and events. Man is left to fend for himself, and there is no Divine intervention in order to reveal ultimate truth. These religions, along with all the other cults mentioned, are *save-yourself religions*.

How very different from our conviction and the teaching of Holy Scripture: "For God so loved the world [us] that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" - John 3:16. And yes, it is possible to know God as a Person. Our Lord Himself declared, "*If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know Him and have seen Him*" - John 14:7. To know Jesus Christ is to know God and His purpose for creating us. And finally, salvation is utterly impossible without the supernatural help of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Eternal life is His gift to all believers who accept His Son, Jesus Christ: "But to all who received Him (Jesus Christ), who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood *nor the will of man, but of God*" - John 1:12-13.

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION (TM) is thought of as a relaxation method by thousands of unsuspecting people. It is in fact a Hindu religious practice. TM as a method of meditation was first introduced in the United States by the Hindu guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi as a religious exercise. But Westerners were not very receptive to Eastern religious practices at the time. So in order to make TM seem nonreligious and appealing to Westerners, Maharishi repackaged TM and presented it as a "scientifically sound, nonreligious psychological exercise designed to relieve stress, to bring inner peace... a positive effect on society, and to enable the advanced practitioner to participate in astral projection (his soul leaving the body) and levitation" (*The Kingdom of the Cults*, p.362).

At the heart of TM is the practice of "turning into one's self" with the use of a *mantra* in order to find inner peace. A mantra is a musical sounding word given to the practitioner by a guru. This word (mantra) is repeated for about 20 minutes a day, twice a day in order to regress one's thoughts to his "ground of being" (subconscious). TM initially produces a calm, much like a drug would, but the "peace" is not permanent. However, there is a grave danger to this practice as one former TM disciple points out: "*The state of mind one enters into through TM is identical to trances the Spiritist mediums use to contact the spirit world*. This leaves the subconscious mind defenseless and wide open to demonic possession... A simple 'Lord help me,' has given me more peace and assurance in times of trials than any amount of [TM] meditation" (Aven, Gene, *My Search*, Life Messengers, Pub., Box 1967, Seattle, WA). A stern warning is also given by a former guru, Rabindranath R. Maharaj, who is now a Christian. He says about the practice of TM, "TM is not a science! TM is definitely a form of the Hindu religion." And the mantra which is given by the guru to the one who wants to practice

TM "is always the name of a Hindu god or demon" (Gaverluk, Dr. Emil, *Hinduism and Other Satanic Deceptions*, Southwest Radio Church, P.O. Box 1144, Oklahoma City, OK 73101. p. 17).

It is truly interesting that our Lord Jesus Christ stressed, "...in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think they will be heard for their many words" (Matt. 6:7). In other words, our Lord is saying that it is useless, when praying, to continuously repeat words over and over, as the heathens do. Jesus Christ Himself is the source of peace and love. He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" - John 14:27. The Scriptures are full of beautiful and heart-touching Psalms upon which we may meditate, and our prayer books, such as the incomparable prayers of St. Narek, will lead any believer to the heart of God and to His peace. We do not need gurus from poverty stricken countries, who cannot even help their own people to come to us and "enlighten" us with their message of peace. Peace is not to be found inside of us unless Jesus Christ is inside our hearts.

ISKCON (Hare Krishnas) is a major sect of the Hindu religion which is visible in many Western nations, and now in Armenia. Most of the above applies to this group also, but with one big exception. Though the majority of Hindu scripture is pantheistic (everything is a part of God) the Hare Krishnas' view of God is more monotheistic, that is, one God. According to their holy book, the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna is the unique incarnation of the one God. However, that is the closest ISKON gets to our Christian faith. Jesus Christ for them is not unique, but He is believed to be a son of God just as anyone else is. In other words, the Hare Krishnas do not regard Jesus Christ as God in the flesh who came to bring salvation.

In addition to the practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM) in order to obtain salvation, the Hare Krishnas have the practice of dancing and chanting the name of Krishna in order to be spiritually purified: "From the body of any person who claps and dances before the Deity, showing manifestations of ecstasy, all the birds of sinful activities fly away upwards" (Prabhupada, *The Nectar of Devotion*, New York: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1970, p.75)

THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

From the above it should be most obvious that all religions **ARE NOT** different roads leading to the same place. That is a completely false notion and very wrong thinking, which unfortunately, many people share. The different religions are different roads which lead to different places. And it is just as wrong to think that as long as a person believes - believes in something - that that's the important thing... Dear friend, if you are of this persuasion, haven't you ever considered the possibility that what you believe in may be deadly wrong? Consider this: no other religion has a founder, who out of love, died for the salvation of the world, including for you; and no other religion can show the empty grave of its founder other than Christianity. Jesus Christ stated most explicitly,

"He who is not with me, is against me..." - Matthew 12:30. Jesus Christ does not leave us with many options: you must accept Him or reject Him.

No matter what the origin of the cult or its historical background, the most common denominator of all the cults mentioned and the hundreds not mentioned, is the non-Christian teachings on God, the Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ. The Person of Jesus Christ, especially, is degraded by the cults.

As Christians of the Armenian Apostolic Church, we believe in the personality of God. In other words, God is not simply the sum of all substance in the universe (monism); or God is not simply a soul who lives in nonhuman objects such as trees, rocks and animals (animism); and God is not an impersonal force as the Hindu's Brahman. When Our Lord Jesus showed His disciples how to pray, He addressed God as "Our Father who art in heaven..." (Matt. 6:9).

In a number of instances, we see God as the Holy Trinity in the Scripture. For example, we read about the baptism of the Lord in the third chapter of the Gospel of Luke (vs. 21-22), that Jesus was publicly baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River so that He may be revealed as the revelation of God on earth. As Christ was baptized, God the Father spoke from heaven and said, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased"; and God the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Another example is the commission of Christ to His disciples, just before He ascended to heaven. He instructed them, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt. 28:19). In the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, we confess God as the Holy Trinity. For example, during the part of the service we refer to as the Eucharist, there is what is known as the "The Blessing of the Holy Trinity". The celebrant declares: "Blessed art thou, holy Father, true God"; "Blessed art thou, holy Son, true God"; and "Blessed art thou, Holy Spirit, true God."

Those who have difficulties with the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity do so because of their purely secular approach. They try to rationalize, and they conclude that if there is one God, how can there be three Persons of the Godhead? They do not accept by faith, as the Church does, the fact that God has revealed Himself as the Holy Trinity. This is not possible to understand with our very finite minds, but it is to be understood as one of the wonderful Divine Mysteries which we accept by faith.

The deity of Jesus Christ is most fundamental to true Christian teaching. If Jesus Christ is not God, He could not have the ability to save us from our sins, then we would be lost in our sins. The fact of His deity is proven amply in the Bible. The following are just a few examples: He is referred to as "God with us" (Matt. 1:23); "Fullness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9); "God and Savior" (II Pet. 1:1). Jesus Himself declared, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). When one of His disciples asked Jesus to lead them to God the Father, Jesus responded by saying, "He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'" (John 14:9).

The Word of God explicitly states about Jesus Christ that "...there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The Bible, which is God's written revelation to mankind, is the light in a darkened world and the refreshing life-giving oasis in a parched desert. To the spiritually hungry it is Bread from heaven, and to the lost person in the raging water, it is a life-saving compass. The cults greatly distort the teachings of the Bible and teach

another way to salvation, giving little or no attention to the great work of Jesus Christ on the cross for our salvation. Salvation is impossible without Jesus Christ - it can never be attained through human effort or "enlightenment". St. Krikor Naregatsi expresses his testimony concerning Jesus Christ most elegantly: "You are my trust, you are salvation: you are the visitation, you are also the Atonement. You are the Beatitude. The healing is with you. Yours is the forgiveness, the only mighty, living, inexpressible Lord Jesus Christ, Benevolent God, for the glory of your Holy nature, for ever and ever. Amen" - *Nareg*, 68:3.

As Armenian Christians, we have as the base of our doctrines the Nicene Creed which is the summary of the most fundamental teachings of the Bible. This was formulated at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. Aristakes, the grandson of St. Krikor the Illuminator, was our Church representative at that great council, which we believe was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The most important teachings of Christianity and the Holy Scripture is summarized in that statement of faith which we recite at every Badarak. Any person or group who teaches anything contrary to the Nicene Creed is not Christian, even if that person claims to be a church member. (The Creed is printed on the back cover of this booklet).

OUR TASK

How true are the words of our Lord, that there are many wolves who are stealing and killing our sheep. For the past several decades we took too much for granted, thinking that Armenians will always attend the Mother Church because of their ethnic identity. But that simply is not the case. We have lost so many active youth from our churches, and their number is growing. We need to be refreshed and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. Where there is the Spirit of God, there is life - Romans 8:6. We need renewal and refreshment!

Our great task and challenge is to make our faith alive and inviting and relevant to our people if we want to survive in the diaspora. Dances, bouregs and shish-ke-babs cannot be substituted for vital and alive Christian faith, and neither can expensive gymnasiums or money for "youth programs" substitute for powerless and weak faith. Parties and dinners only attract young people for the duration of the fun, and the Church will simply be regarded as a hotel or a club, and not as our spiritual home to which they must make a commitment.

If the leadership - the adults - of our churches cannot take enough time and interest in their faith, in order to learn it and to defend it against the wolves, they will be of no value to our young people. They will in fact be saying to the youth, "We really don't take our faith seriously - God has no relevance in our daily lives". Through Hosea the prophet, God warned, "My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). And without knowledge, there is no faith.

In view of the above, we can say that the highest and holiest responsibility of the Armenian Apostolic Church is teach the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures to Her children for the realization of faith and salvation. It is the most powerful weapon and also the flag of the Church that Sahag-Mesrob, the great evangelists, missionaries and

Apostles of their time offered to our people as the Bread from heaven. Only through the "Breath of God" can we instill in the hearts of our brothers and sisters the love, peace and understanding which has been promised only to the faithful.

That Biblical knowledge is vital for the health and life of any Christian and the Church; this is very plainly pointed out by the following statement which was made by H. Mantagooni, one of Sahag-Mesrob's junior disciples: "The one who has the Bible, but does not use it, is like a lamp which cannot give light; an eye that is blind; a spring without water; a dried up tree which does not bear fruit nor give benefit to anyone". This can be applied to any nation, church, family or individual who has God's Word, the Holy Bible, but refuses to believe and use its instruction.

THE CREED OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is of the substance of the Father.

God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten and not made; of the very same nature of the Father, by whom all things came into being, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible;

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, was incarnate, was made man, was born perfectly of the holy virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit:

By whom He took body, soul, and mind and everything that is in man, truly and not in semblance.

He suffered and was crucified and was buried and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven with the same body and sat at the right hand of the Father.

He is to come with the same body and with the glory of the Father to judge the living and the dead; of His kingdom there is no end.

We also believe in the Holy Spirit, the uncreate and perfect; who spoke through the Law and the Prophets and the Gospels;

Who came down upon the Jordan, preached through the apostles and dwelt in the saints.

We believe also in only one catholic and apostolic holy Church;

In one baptism with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins;

In the resurrection of the dead, in the everlasting judgment of souls and bodies, in the kingdom of heaven and in eternal life.

THE ANATHEMA

As for those who say there was a time when the Son was not or there was a time when the Holy Spirit was not or that they came into being out of nothing or who say that the Son of God or the Holy Spirit are of a different substance and that they are changeable or alterable, such the catholic and apostolic holy Church does anathematize.