

THE SERVANT

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THE CULTS IN POLITICS

A RECIPE FOR CATASTROPHE?

By Bill Foltz

It would be absurd to suggest that all cults and their leaders lust after political power. But history shows that many have, sometimes with disastrous results. This article examines three historically influential cults and draws several relevant conclusions.

Early Mormon History

Joseph Smith, who founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ("Mormons") in 1830, actively sought political prestige. In 1839, he and his followers took over Commerce, IL and renamed the town Nauvoo. The Illinois legislature granted the new residents a generous charter which included the right to organize a militia. Soon Nauvoo was the largest city in Illinois, with 12,000 people. From this formidable economic, and military base, Smith became powerful politically. In 1844, he announced his candidacy for the Presidency of the United States.

Not all Mormons approved, however. On June 7, 1844, dissidents published the first and only edition of the Nauvoo Expositor, which complained about polygamy and Smith's political aspirations. On Smith's orders, the printing press was smashed and every copy that could be found burned.¹ For this, Joseph and his brother Hyrum were arrested and jailed in Carthage, IL. On June 27, an angry mob broke into the jail. Joseph Smith shot three of the men, before he and his brother were killed.²

On Smith's orders the press was smashed..

The Mormons then headed west. Brigham Young and other Mormon leaders schemed to incorporate much of the Western U. S. into an independent country, or failing that, a state in the Union, called Deseret.³ U. S. government policy, combining appeasement with containment, forced them to settle for Utah. From there, they launched a new round of political intrigues and covert violence.

(see "Cults in Politics," p. 2)

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The New Age and Reincarnation

The New Age movement is a belief system followed by people in all walks of life. Some of its more famous disciples are Gary Hart, John Denver, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and Shirley MacLaine. The movement can not be limited to a specific religion or denomination because its followers claim to be members of every religion, including Christianity. The New Age Movement is a large network of people bound together by common values based in mysticism, and a vision of a coming new age of peace and enlightenment.¹

One of the beliefs of the New Age is the concept of reincarnation. The roots of this teaching are found in ancient Hinduism. A Gallup Poll indicates 23% of the American public believes in some form of reincarnation.² In other words, 48 million Americans look to this doctrine as their hope of life after death.

Reincarnation is the name given to an almost endless cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth of a person's soul. According to this belief, a person's present condition (wealth, social position, intelligence, health, or lack thereof) is determined by the good or bad deeds done in past lives. This concept is known as karma. By doing enough good deeds in thousands of lives, good karma will bring about enlightenment or "salvation".

Christianity teaches something very different from New Age views. The Bible teaches that salvation comes by trusting in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins (Romans 10:9, 10). Doing good deeds may please God, but it will have no impact upon one's salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9). After death, people will not be reincarnated, rather they will be judged by God (Hebrews 9:27). Believing in reincarnation also denies the Christian belief in Christ's resurrection. Just as Jesus Christ's body was raised to life (Luke 24:39), so shall His followers own bodies be raised (I Corinthians 15:51-58). Jesus said, **"I Am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"** (John 11:25,26 NASB)

Notes

1. Miller, Elliot. "What is the New Age Movement?" Forward. (Christian Research Institute, San Juan Capistrano, CA) Summer 1985 p 9.
2. Albrecht, Mark. Reincarnation: A Christian Appraisal. (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL) p 9.

Free pamphlets on the following topics are available upon request:

- 1) Reincarnation,
- 2) Astrology,
- 3) Satanism,
- 4) The Media,
- 5) New Age in Public Schools,
- 6) Dungeons and Dragons, and
- 7) Halloween.

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Cults in Politics

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The Taiping Rebellion, China

Little known in the West, this upheaval may have been the largest and most destructive pseudo-Christian cult movement in history. In 1850, Hung Hsiuch'uan started a religio-political movement based upon a new trinity with God the Heavenly Father, Christ the Divine Elder Brother, and Hung himself the Divine Younger Brother. Hung pledged to establish "the Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" His doctrine was a conglomeration of Chinese philosophical concepts, the Mosaic Law, and Western reformism.

By 1854, Hung's armies had conquered three provinces and were waging war in nine others. They ruled China's wealthiest and most populous area for 10 years. They proclaimed an ambitious social program including communal ownership of land and equality for women. But it never made much headway because "...the...leadership found the recesses of the harem more congenial than the edifice of political reform...."⁴

In 1860, China and the Western powers launched a united effort to crush Hung. The fall of Nanking, his capital, in 1864 put an end to the rebellion. Hung and about 100,000 of his followers committed suicide. An additional 20 million lay dead in the wake of his "Heavenly Kingdom."

Many Christians suffered because of Hung's association with Christianity. For years, Chinese Christians and Western missionaries were the victims of riots and massacres. This culminated in the hideous Boxer Rebellion of 1900-01, in which thousands were slaughtered.

The People's Temple

Jeannie Mills and her husband were leading People's Temple members, until their defection in 1976. She describes how Jones, like so many other cult leaders, amassed political power. Jones's list of supporters in California reads like a who's who of liberal-left politicians and mainline churchmen. He even served a year as Chairman of the San Francisco Housing Authority.⁵

Despite the valiant efforts of the Mills' and other defectors to alert the government and public to the dangers of this cult press coverage was almost uniformly positive until 1977. Then, Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy wrote an

(see "Cults in Politics," p.4)

HALLOWEEN?

There are many different opinions among Christians when it comes to participating in Halloween functions. Most would probably agree the emphasis on the dead and the occult goes against I Thes. 5:22 to avoid even the appearance of evil. Trick-or-treating is now days a dangerous practice. Police departments issue warnings about unwrapped candy laced with drugs or poison. Tucson and Phoenix area hospitals offer free X-ray exams of goodies to spot pins and razor blades. Satanists and witches across the country celebrate Halloween as a high religious holiday (usually during the night of the full moon closest to Oct. 31). Many are familiar with the pagan origins of the day (Ask for a free tract on Halloween for a study on its roots).

Although some feel it is wrong to acknowledge the day at all, a growing number of churches take the opportunity to witness to their communities. Jack-O-lanterns are replaced with crosses, and instead of monster masks, kids are wearing angel's halos. Even the name is changed to a "Lord of the harvest festival" or a "Bible costume party."

Witches and demons do really exist (look under "Religious Organizations" in the Tucson Yellow Pages to find proof of witches; and read the Bible to find proof of demons). If you were black, you wouldn't allow your children to dress as Klansmen; and if you were a Jew you wouldn't let your kids wear swastikas. Should Christians permit their children to wear witch's costumes or devil's suits? In Phil. 4:8, Paul tells us that whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be praise, think on these things. †

Dr. Walter R. Martin
9/10/28 - 6/26/89

Walter R. Martin, director of the Christian Research Institute, based in California, died at home this summer "while on his knees." He was a pioneer in exposing false religions and a personal friend to us at the C. A. F. He will be missed. "He left the ones he loved to be with the ONE he loved most."

The Person of Jesus Christ

by Tom Campbell

Down through the centuries, the person of Jesus Christ has been a subject of great controversy. This controversy has centered around the summarization of two great biblical truths. The first truth is that Jesus Christ is God, as illustrated in passages such as Titus 2:13, where he is called "our Great God and Savior" (see also Jn 1:1, Jn 1:18, Jn 20:28, Ro 9:5, He 1:8, 2 Pe 1:1). The second great truth is that Jesus Christ was and is a man, as illustrated in passages such as 1 Tim 2:5, where he is called "the man Christ Jesus" (see also Jn 1:14, He 2:14, 1 Jn 4:2, 2 Jn 7). The summarization of these truths can be approached in three main ways. The first way is to ignore one of the two, the second is to alter the meaning of one of the two, and the third is to accept both as existing together in harmony. For those who acknowledge the Scriptures as being fully inspired by God, there is only one option, and that is the third. The problem, of course, is that not all have taken that position and therefore church history is punctuated with those who have subjected the Word of God to their own purposes and reasoning, and have ignored and manipulated the biblical data. The result has been the birth of untold numbers of heretical movements. Some of these movements will be looked at briefly in an effort to illustrate the fact that the Christian church always has recognized, defined and defended the biblical view of the person of Christ.

Very early in church history, a group arose called the Ebionites. They fully accepted Jesus Christ as the human Messiah, but denied totally his deity. They rejected all of the New Testament writings, except for a Hebrew version of Matthew. It should come as no surprise that they were condemned as heretics by early leaders such as Irenaeus. Although this movement died early, there were many more that arose to carry on various forms of the heresy. Today, in fact, because of the infiltration of liberalism, the deity of Christ is being denied from the very pulpits of many churches that claim to be Christian.

Another movement that arose very early was called the Docetist movement. These took the opposite extreme, and

denied the humanity of Christ. They claimed that a body of flesh and bones never existed, but rather Jesus Christ was a temporary manifestation of God in a phantom body. This error, though condemned by early leaders such as Ignatius lived on. The Christian Scientists today bear a striking resemblance to this movement.

In the fourth Century, an even more serious error arose. This one was propagated by a man named Arius. He claimed to fully accept the biblical position, but insisted that the Church in general had misinterpreted it. He acknowledged the humanity and deity of Christ, but made it clear, in regard to his deity, that he is not God in the same sense as is the Father in Heaven. He claimed that the preexistent Son was created by the Father before anything else came into being. The Son then ruled along with the Father as a lesser God. The leaders of the Church responded very decisively at the Council of Nicea, in pointing out that there never was a time when the Son did not exist, and that the Son is of the same substance as the Father, being distinct only in person. That was and is the only possible summarization of the biblical data. For there is only one God (Deut 6:4), both the Father and Son are referred to as God (Jn 6:27, Jn 1:1), and they are clearly individual persons as they are shown relating one to another (Jn 17:1). Although the Church clearly condemned that heresy, it did not completely die. It has surfaced time and again, and has in our century been revived and is flourishing in the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Because our battle is not against people and movements, but against the father of lies (Satan), there never has nor ever will be a time, in this life, when the truths of Scripture will not be attacked and distorted by the enemy. Christians have always had to, and still must "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). There is great comfort in knowing, however, that those who have gone before us have already blazed a trail of truth through a

(see "Jesus Christ," p.4)

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expose in *New West* magazine which sent Jones scurrying to his compound in Guyana.⁶ California had been rescued, but 912 people had to die before the world realized the true character of Jim Jones.

Conclusions

Many cult leaders, not content with the godlike power they hold over their followers, have an insatiable lust for political power. They try to gain control of a city, region, or nation. Bloodshed sometimes results. What a contrast to our Lord Jesus Christ, who told Pilate, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight..." (John 18:36 RSV).

The Christian community can protect itself and society, and enhance its testimony in the world, by keeping an eye on politically-oriented cults and keeping the public informed concerning their schemes.

Notes

1. This is one of the many chapters of their history that the L.D.S. church struggles to rewrite.
2. The fact that Smith carried a pistol can be found in the L.D.S. publication *History of the Church* vol. 6 p 617-8.
3. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, "Deseret". (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston 1978) p 357.
4. Paul H. Clyde, *The Far East: A History of the Impact fo the West on Eastern Asia*, 3rd. Edition. (Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1958) p 245.
5. Mills, Jeannie. *Six Years With God: Life Inside Jim Jones' People's Temple*. p 45-47.
6. Mills, p 61-71.

Jesus Christ

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wilderness of error. It is not that we can ever lay aside the guide book. We can, however, be encouraged by the fact that as we confront the wilderness of error in our day, we can see before us the ancient markings of the trail made by those who have gone before.

WITNESSING TIPS

by Jack Gracie

One of the obstacles Christians will encounter when witnessing to someone deceived by a non-Christian cult is disbelief. In other words, the cultist is hearing what you are saying, knowing what you are saying, even understanding what you are saying, but refusing to believe or accept it.

There are several reasons contributing to this disbelief or refusal to believe phenomenon. The first is spiritual in nature as II Cor. 4:4 tells us, "The god of this world has blinded their minds." This is why prayer is so important. Secondly, cult members feel tremendous guilt and social pressures from fellow members to conform to their system by never questioning it-- to do so might

mean the loss of their membership and salvation.

And finally, imagine your self witnessing to a cultist about the Gospel of Jesus and the need to receive Him as personal Saviour. He/she may hear and understand what you are saying but struggle with fears that have never crossed your mind. Thoughts such as: "If I accept Jesus as my Saviour, all of my friends will reject me for I will have left the group." Or, "If I place my faith in Christ, my spouse will divorce me and my family leave me. Is it worth it?" Or, in the case of the Jim Jones Peoples' Temple group, "I could be in physical danger if I reveal the truth."

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In closing, it seems fitting to quote a portion of a statement formulated at Chalcedon in 451 A.D., "--our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhood and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man--of one substance with God as regards his Godhead, and

at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood--recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation--the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and one substance--." †