



# BETHEL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

COURSE: KINGDOM OF CULTS

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

This course looks at what is a cult, how membership is achieved, and how to break away. Cultism is a very spiritual experience cannot be easily broken. The major world religion is examined and some of their offshoots.

## **COURSE MATERIALS (SUGGESTED)**

The following books were used in research while preparing for this course and are suggested readings:

1. Sects, 'Cults' and Alternative Religions – by David Barrett
2. Understanding World Religions - by George W. Braswell
3. Cults - by Jill Karson
4. Kingdom of Cults - by Walter Martin

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Class participation are essential and 15% of your grade.

A final exam will be given and is 45% of your grade.

A 3-to-5-page paper on a cult is due the last night of class and is 40% of your grade.

Extra credit can be earned by writing a paper detailing the difference between a cult and a mainstream religion or answering the question “is cult involvement a matter of volition or mind control”.

The class provides student with information and arms him with knowledge for kingdom building. The thrust is to prepare student to win souls in the war for souls in a religious war. The student must know what he facing when dealing with different religious people/spirits and how to break the power of the enemy.

## HISTORY OF RELIGION

As long as man has been on the earth there has been some belief system. The first man, Adam knew God, thus the first religious system was one where one God existed. This all changed after the fall of man and it was not long before man was confused and was worshipping all kinds of objects. Not only were there many gods but a multiplicity of objects involved in the process.

Man was involved with agriculture, fishing and hunting. Their worship became intermingled with their everyday affairs. If the gods favored them, they would have success in their endeavors, if they were not favored then they would not have success. Their wars were determined by the strength of their gods. The gods became many, specialized and human like.

### Negative Features

James and Marcia Rudin authors of *Prison or Paradise: The New Religious Cults* list the following attributes of new cults. The negative school considers all new religious groups as dangerous institutions that threaten the individuals mental and physical health, the family's well-being, and the established cultural traditions as a whole.

1. The swearing of allegiance to an all-powerful leader
2. The discouragement of rational thought
3. Often deceptive recruitment techniques
4. A weakening of the members psychological make-up
5. The manipulation of guilt
6. Isolation from the outside world
7. Complete power of the leader, who decides whatever the members do
8. Dedication of all energy and finances to the cult, or sometimes, to the benefit of the leader
9. Cult members work full time for the group without adequate pay
10. Cults are anti-women, anti-child, or even anti-family
11. Belief that the end of the world is near at hand
12. An ethical system that adopts the principle that the end justifies the means
13. An aura of secrecy and mystery
14. Frequently, an aura of violence or potential violence.

Cults are defined as “socially dangerous false religions”. Conservative Christians define cults as “any religion that departs from traditional interpretation of scripture”.

What is your definition?

Karson asserts that what is important to determine is whether or not the social-psychological dynamics within a particular religion are potentially dangerous to its members and/or to the larger society.

There are several early warning signs that are always present, while not all have to be present in any group most will be:

1. Charismatic leader
2. Divine authority – leader claims to have God's final revelation or that he is God's prophet or chosen one.
3. Use vs. misuse of authority (God given, man surrendered, making personal decisions, limiting rights)
4. Above the law- means justifies the end
5. End of the world scenarios
6. Salvation-we are the only right ones
7. Group isolation
8. Deception

### **Cult Recruitment**

Margaret Thaler Singer is a clinical psychologist whom after much counseling with cult members wrote the book entitled "Cults In Our Midst". Singer believes that cults use intense and sophisticated psychological control methods to recruit and convert new members. They use verbal seduction and charm to lure new members. Singer says the use of manipulation, isolation and deception belies the claim that members join of their own free will.

The fact that there is a cult for everyone, regardless of your stage in life, interest or belief system. You can be a potential recruit at any time. Each group develops its own method of recruitment. Some recruit openly, thru mass media, billboards and of course personal contact.

The first approach includes A. An enthusiastic warm sincere and friendly person who shows interest in your life. B. After establishing common ground they delve and/or probe into your life and ask or suggest a remedy for your problem. Most people do not seek out this group but are approached.

### **Hinduism**

Over 3000 years old and is considered the oldest major religion, it is a system of interrelated religions. It is the major religion of the Indian people from the Indus Valley region (India and Pakistan). The Rig-Veda is its sacred book (1028 songs) was composed about 1400BC.

This area seems to have no dominate single form of worship and no single or dominate God. There is an apparent hierarchy which consist of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and Shiva the destroyer. Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu.

Hindu's believe in reincarnation (soul is reborn into another body. Not always the same species, a man could be reborn a tree, a dog). The quality of life you get depends on your past life. The idea of Karma is central to Hinduism.

## **Sikhism**

Sikh is seen as a fusion between Hinduism and Islam. Its founder Guru Nanak (1469-1539) declares that he is following God, because there is neither Hindu or Muslim. Nanak followed the teaching of the mystic Kabir (1440-1518). Bhakti Hinduism (devotion to God rather than religious ceremonial and idol worship), Advaita and Sufism are elements of Sikhism.

Sikhs originated in Punjab (border of Pakistan and India) and became warfarers because of the non-affinity to either Hindu's or Muslims who battled for control of the region. The devout wears a turbin and a sword at all times. In recent times they are a more political group but continue to have skirmishes in retaliation to either Hindu or Muslim aggression. Despite all those things, Sikhs at heart are deeply democratic and egalitarian. They are monotheistic and have a spirit of reconciliation and keen social awareness.

The Granth (the book) contains writings from both Nanak and Kabir as well teachings from Hindu and Muslim traditions. The Granth is their immortal guru. Sikhs have had ten successive guru's who are highly revered, stemming from Nanak to Gobind Singh (1666-1708). In America Sikh Dharma is the major strain, its educational wing 3HO(Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization) popularized it. Kundalini yoga is taught widely in the west, enables its practitioners to meditate on Gods name by the use of breathing and being centered.

## **Sufism**

The mystical side of Islam, dating back to 700A.D. Sufi is Arabic for wool-clad, which refers to the traditional coarse robe of the ascetic believer, or Safa which means purity. Sufism is rich with poetry, music and ecstatic dance. The Mawlawiya or Mevlevi (orders of Sufism) practice this way as well as repeating Gods name continuously. Sufis put personal relationship before strict outward observance.

Because of the Sufis close relationship with the mystics, Gnostics, philosophers, Neo-Platonist, Greek Orthodox and Hinduism they are looked on with suspicion by traditional Islamists. They value experience with God by whomever. They exchange knowledge with the Cabbalist in the middle ages and had links with the Knights Templar. Their symbolism is said to have influenced the early Freemasons. They are yet under strained relationship with other Muslim religions. In the west and especially the U.S. Sufis claim not to be a Islamic group but a universal religion.

## **Buddhism**

Buddha means the "Enlightened One" is the chief figure in this religion which was founded by Siddhartha Gautama (480-560 BC). There are two main branches of Buddhism called Theravada and Mahayana. However Tantric Buddhism and Zen Buddhism are other notable forms. Celestial bodhisattvas and mahasattvas are on the same level of gods (held in high

esteem) and are teachers and leaders. They must help others along the path before they can reach Nirvana. Nirvana is ultimate state were Buddhist attempt to earn.

Siddhartha Gautama studied Hindu philosophy before enlightenment. Under a fig tree is where he got his truth. Four noble truths and the Eightfold Path are the cruxes of his teaching. The term Buddha which is now granted to heads of various sects, means enlightened one as well as teacher, master, great man, lord and exalted and or blessed one. The Pure Land sect led by Amitabha is an example. Some view Buddhism as atheistic or at least agnostic.

### **Oriental Traditions**

The two native religions to China are Confucian and Taoist, though there was various practices prior to the formation of the aforementioned none were mainstream or highly organized.

Confucius was born about 550 B.C. in Shangtung province. Being a civil servant allowed him to travel extensively and his influence and notoriety spread. He founded a school. Confucius was contrary to popular belief was not a mystic but his teaching was more rationalistic and humanistic. Confucianism is built on the importance of right order, both in the family and society. Honor is chief among virtues, this leads to a high priority on family and duty.

Taoism was founded by Lao Tzu during the sixth century B.C. as a philosophy of laissez-faire. In short, minding one own business and quietness were the main principles of Taoism.

Both Lao Tzu and Confucius were deified by Chinese emperors. Partly to legitimize a Chinese religion at a time when Mahayana Buddhism was impacting China.

Shintoism is the major religion of Japan. It is practiced on all levels of society. The Japanese government supports Shinto shrines and rituals which closely align the sun deities with the emperor

### **Jehovah Witness**

Jehovah Witnesses are a millennialist group, meaning that they believe in the millennial (1000year)reign of Christ. They have made many false predictions about when the return of Christ was going to take place. The first was 1874 then 1914 (which they say marked the end of the gentile age) ,1920 after World War 1, 1925, 1940 after the end of World War 2, 1975 and most recently 1984.

They are also an evangelistic group, working door to door dogmatically sharing their teaching ( making converts not disciples). Their name is taken from Isaiah 43:10-12 where the phrase “you are my witnesses” is used twice. Here Jesus reveals God as Jehovah. This revelation and the fact that some will dwell on earth with Christ eternally are what makes them the only ones with these truths. Witness most popular belief is that of the 144,000 who will rule with Christ in heaven. This group was first defined as the first 144,000 witnesses, then to the best 144,000 witnesses.

Jehovah Witnesses have translated their own bible, The New World Translation. They publish two teaching and evangelistic tools, Awake and Watchtower magazines, which are given free but donations are expected. The following list are a few things that are peculiar to this group, though not exclusive:

1. No celebration of Holidays
2. No celebration of birthdays
3. No blood transfusions
4. They are spiritual Jews
5. Will not fight in wars
6. Catholics and protestant are under control of the devil.
7. Christ did not die on a cross, but a stake or tree.
8. Denial of the trinity.

The most critical stance that separates the witnesses from mainstream Christian groups is their denial of Jesus being God. He is the son of God, having been with him so long that he took on his attributes. Holy Spirit is God in action, but not God.

Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) was brought up as a Congregationalist in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, wrote seven major works which lay the foundation for what witnesses believe. The following statement declares his position:

“people cannot see the devine plan by studying the Bible by itself... if anyone lays the scripture studies aside... and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he merely read the Scripture Studies with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in light at the end of two years, because he would have light of the Scriptures.

## **ISKCON**

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness or Hare Krishna,s (and other synonyms) were founded by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977) whose birth name was Abhay Charan De in Calcutta, India. He was follower of the Gaudiya Mission, a Hindu group and was sent by Bhakti Saddhanta to take Krishna Consciousness to the west.

Prabhupada translated Hindu scriptures to English and writing a commentary which he claimed to be the “only pure” translation. He became sannyasin in 1959, renouncing his earlier life, possessions and family. He moved to New York in 1965 and then to San Francisco in 1966 where ISKCON was founded.

George Harrison of Beatles fame became instrumental in popularizing the Krishna’s in England, recording there chant and purchasing a headquarters for them in the UK. From there the movement spread quickly drawing hippy types and ex-drug addicts to their enlightening way of life. The way was marked by communal style living with mostly everything in common. Very little personal property was allowed and the leaders also called sannyasin (especially the leading 11 who were set up as the ruling body by Prabhupada).



Prabhupada's first and most controversial disciple was Kirtananda (Keith Ham), the son of a Baptist preacher. Kirtananda broke away and set up a community called New Vrindavan which was mixed between Buddhism and Christianity and was center in West Virginia. He was expelled by the governing body in 1987 and is now in jail for fraud. Several others have brought much controversy to the worldwide movement. Much of the controversy has stemmed from either criminal activity, sexual relationships and drug use, all of which is frowned upon and is cause for strict discipline.

Krishna consciousness a branch of Hinduism teaches a relationship between individuals and a personal God, Krishna, who is the 8th incarnation (avatar) of Vishnu. Krishna's declare that Krishna is the original form of Vishnu. Rama and Buddha were also avatars of Vishnu. Krishna is regarded as the supreme Godhead, being omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient and is the sustaining energy of all creation. Krishna's believe that by living a life deep spirituality they can achieve pure, blissful consciousness in the current life. The ultimate purpose of man is to serve God. By chanting the Hare Krishna mantra, repeating the names of God, helps them to attain a deep love for God.

### **Baha'i Faith**

A monotheistic group which had its roots in Islam but no longer claims to be so. Their God sent prophets are Bab(gate) and Baha'u'llah, who reveal god to them. Baha'i Faith began in Persia (Iran) in 1844, when a young merchant named Mirza Ali Muhammad began to preach that the day of God was at hand. He proclaimed himself to be the Bab/gate and was the forerunner to the greater one who would usher in the new age of peace and justice. He was executed by firing squad in 1850 after announcing that Babism was a new religion.

After Muhammad's death he was succeeded by Mirza Husayn-Ali Nuri who took on the role in 1863 of Baha'u'llah (the glory of God) the one who Bab had foretold. He was exiled and spent the rest of his days in Acre, Isreal. There has been a succession of his offspring which has helped perpetuate the religion.

Bab wrote a sacred book entitled al-Bayan, and Baha'u'llah wrote a vast number of books and letters, including The Hidden Words and Kitab-i-Aqdas (the most holy book) as well as others are held on par with the Bible and Koran. Baha'u'llahs writings still exist today in their handwritten form.

Baha'I is believe that their God given mandate is to bring unity to all men under God. They believe that this life is preparation for the after life and that death is the door into it. They have no set priesthood or liturgy for service. They accept the prophets from Judaism, Christianity and Islam and claims that those tenets pre-empt what Baha'I has brought from the same God, creator.

-Baha'u'llah is seen as a descendant of Abraham and a fulfillment of O.T. prophecy (Isaiah 11:1).

- Jesus is a prophet, not God.

- For Muslims Baha'u'llah fulfills the Korans promise for the "Day of God".

-For Hindu's Baha'u'llah is the tenth avatar of Krishna.

-For Buddhist he is the foretold Maitreya, the Buddha of universal fellowship.

## **Satanism**

Satanism is called an offshoot of Christianity. Because Satan (Satan, Lucifer, the devil, the evil one, the accuser, god of this age) is a personality identified in scripture. He is presented as the archenemy of God and man. Dualism has him on par with God, primarily because of the prevalence of evil as well as good. Zoroaster taught dualism. Christians believe him to be a powerful but limited fallen angel.

Lucifer (Ezek.28:14)the anointed cherub that covered the throne is described and so is his fall. He desired to be above his creator, this belies his desire to be worshiped. He will do whatever he can to gain this honor, secretly or deceitfully or by force. Lucifer is Latin for light bearer or light bringer which is allegorically confused for the bright an morning star of Rev.22:16.

Paganist have depicted Satan with horns, a tail, cloven hoofs and a pitchfork. Much of what we know concerning Satanist has been written by Christians. Anton LaVey the author of the Satanic Bible and founder of the church of Satan in San Francisco declares that his aim is to make carnal desires a proper object of celebration. B.H.Wolfe who wrote the introduction say's "Satanism is a blatantly selfish, brutal religion". The following are some of the fact statements LaVey makes declaring what Satan stands for in anti-thesis

1. Indulgence instead of abstinence
2. Kindness to those who deserve it, instead of wasting it on ingrates.
3. Vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek.
4. All the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental or emotional gratification.

There is not a large number of members in the cult, the largest concentration in America is in San Francisco. In Michigan's prison system and many states, it is an approved religion. Many who claim to be Satanist are those caught in pseudo-Gothic rituals. Many have recreated their own brands of black magic. These people may practice more evil than those who actually worship Satan.

## **WICCA**

Aleister Crowley is credited with writing the Wiccan rede 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law'. Wicca is another name for witchcraft, used to avoid the negative connotation of the latter term. Wic is Saxon for 'to bend'. Another synonym for witchcraft is simply craft, which many practitioners refer themselves as members of. They use avoidance of judgment and become very uncomfortable with the mention of Exodus 22:18 "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live". Witch historically meant 'one who poisons wells'. Wiccans do not worship Satan.

While both men and women are called witches, most in the highest orders of Wicca are female. There is an inclusionary movement for men to feel more accepted. The third way, which



creates a new manhood, neither bully or wimp, every woman's dream. To quote Shan, Clan mother or priestess of the House of the Goddess, 'So what does this mean for men'. The Dominicans believed that women were the progenitors of witchcraft and were afraid of them. Believing them to have the power to emasculate men, even physically collecting their body parts and keeping them in birds nest, where they continue to move.

The Dianic Wicca comes from the ancient worship of the Goddess Diana and has nothing to do with Satan worship. They are pantheist, not female monotheist. Like other Neo-paganist movements Wiccans cannot readily identify any specific roots, but say they are a synthesis from many.

In 1951 Britain repealed its witchcraft laws and Gerald Gardner published *Witchcraft Today*. Gardner had joined a coven of witches in southern England in 1939. His publication/re-creation was a mixture of folklore, Masonic rituals and Crowley type magic with major sexual overtones. His book of *Shadows* contained rituals and ceremony.

In the 1960's Alex and Maxine Sanders popularized witchcraft even the more, their Alexandrian style witchcraft is much freer. Maxine is now the leader of Wicca. Stewart Farrar states that modern has roots in both old pagan religions and the recent occult revival. The opinions vary as to whether the ancient or "old religion" or recent trapping have a greater significance on the modern practices. Some say that heredity carries the greater weight than tradition. The *Charge of the Goddess* is the nearest thing says Shah to a state of belief and is written by Gardner and Doreen Valiente with some excerpts taken from Leland's *Aradia*.

Most Wiccans profess that they practice white magic and do not attempt to hurt people. They use their craft for personal gain and to protect themselves. They state that black magic has its price and they try to avoid it. As one practitioner told me "if I don't like someone, I say they are to go somewhere else and be happy". Most do not admit to practicing any blood sacrifices but are ritualistic.

### **Esoteric Movements**

Esoteric movements are many and are ageless, like many of the older established religions they pass the time limits (100yrs.) for new religions but are not clear of other limits. They are synthesis or mixtures of thoughts, either eastern and/or western. They are considered mystical, magical, Gnostic (possessing secret knowledge) or Judeo-Christian.

This group includes Theosophy, Anthroposophy, Maitreya/Benjamin Crème, Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, Subud, Order of the Golden Dawn, Builders of the Adytum, Society of the Inner Light, Servants of the Light, The London Group, The I Am Movement, Church Universal and Triumphant, The Emissaries, The flying Sauser Cults, The Aetherius Society, The Raelian Movement and finally the Rosicrucians.

### **Rosicrucian**

Some Rosicrucian organizations (of which there are many) are very secretive. These reserve their membership to those highest-level Freemasons. Today there are clear links and cross influences between Rosicrucians and the Illuminati, alchemy, Hermetic Philosophy, western

Mystery traditions as well as other forms of Esoteric Christianity. The Ancient and Mystical Order of the Rosey (AMORC) advertise widely and claim 250,000 members who subscribe to the teachings. AMORC traces its lineage back to the early Rosicrucian's.

Christian Rosenkreutz (1378-1484) set up a fraternity called Spiritus Sanctum or House of the Holy Spirit. This was dedicated to the well-being of mankind, social reform and healing the sick. This reformation was to be accomplished by men of secret, magical learning. Curiously, in 1604 Rosenkreutz's tomb was opened and his body was not corrupted.

Lectorium Rosicrucianism was founded in the Netherlands by two brothers Z.W. and L.Leene who formed the International School of the Golden Rosycross. L.Leene who wrote under the pen-name J.van Rijckenborgh wrote many books. Its publication, Pentagram is published in ten languages. Lectorium teaches a form of Gnostic Christianity, teaches that all great religions teach the same core living values and all lead to some kind of rebirth and reconnection with God. Gnosticism usually teaches a contrast between the spiritual and material worlds. Lectorium teaches that there are two natural orders 1. Contains both the living and the dead, characterized by pairs of opposites and perishability(Dialectics) 2. The original divine nature order.

“Following insight into the difference between the two nature-orders and the desire for salvation, one can achieve the rebirth of transfiguration through self-mortification, the total self-surrender of the I-personality to the actualization of this salvation. This is followed by a new mode of life, under the direction of the aroused spirit-spark-atom, the new reborn soul, and fulfillment, the resurrection in the original field of light”. (pg.181 ect, Cults and Alternative Religions D.V.Barrett)

The Rosicrucian movement places a great deal of importance on symbols. These symbols not only give meaning and identity to the various sect and secret societies they are symbolic of the forces behind the ideologies. Symbols include the golden rose on a golden cross, the circle containing a square and an equilateral triangle, the circle of eternal love containing the fiery triangle and the square of construction, the pentagram which is symbol of the reborn human being.

### **Kingdom of Cults Teaching Notes**

1. Questions 1,2 are to provoke discussion. View level of competencies on subject matter. Introduce the idea that there is individual affect that determines cult members involvement levels. What is dangerous to one person is not too all. Inform class that personal gain is not always motive of the leader and that most are sincere.
2. Small group work should be given without prior preparation. Forming small groups of 2-3. Group should decide who will give the report. A. The first group is a competition seeing who can come up with the names of the most cults and what makes them cults. B. Next group discusses if cult recruitment/involvement is a matter of self will or if the will has been compromised thru deception. C. If Jesus is accepted, why am I wrong say's Islam and Jehovah witnesses?

3. When teaching Satanism suggest that the students do an exhaustive search on diabolos and daimonion in their concordance.

### **Final Examination**

1. What does Buddha mean?
2. Who founded Sufism?
3. What is believed to be the world's oldest religion?
4. What determines if a group/cult is dangerous or not?
5. Who has the largest percentage of recruitment
  - A. Divorcee's
  - B. Business Professionals
  - C. Students
6. What makes students most attractive?
7. Are Buddhists monotheistic?
8. Are Hindu's monotheistic?
9. Where did the Baha'i Faith began?
10. Sufism is called the \_\_\_\_\_ side of Islam?
11. How do Sufi's get union with God?
12. Sikhism is a fusion between what two religions?
13. What is the name of the Sikhs holy book?
14. Who is the chief prophet of Islam?
15. Who did Muhammad meet with to receive his revelation?
16. All Muslims must attempt to make a pilgrimage to \_\_\_\_\_ at least once in their lives.
17. Islam means?
18. Muslims annual fast period is called \_\_\_\_\_ ?
19. Buddhism was founded by?
20. Nirvana is attained by?
21. The two main strains of Buddhism are?
22. The most noticeable strain of Buddhism in the west is?
23. Hindus came from what region?
24. The Hindu trinity consist of?

25. Krishna is an avatar of \_\_\_\_\_?
26. Zoroaster formed what cult?
27. Where did most Zoroastrians move when Islam took hold in Persia?
28. Who was proclaimed as Bab, and what does Bab mean in Baha'i faith.
29. What does Bab mean?
30. Who does Bab liken himself too?
31. What does Baha'u'llah mean?
32. What sacred book did Bab write?
33. Baha'i Faith brings \_\_\_\_\_ to all peoples under God.
34. Baha'u'llah is the latest avatar of \_\_\_\_\_?
35. Who is the author of the Satanic Bible?
36. Satan promotes \_\_\_\_\_ instead of abstinence.
37. Satan represents all the "\_\_\_\_\_ " because they all lead to physical, mental or emotional gratification.
38. Explain why some cultic groups are not considered dangerous.
39. What factors make a cult dangerous?
40. Which of the following people are especially at risk of cult recruitment.
  - A. Lonely
  - B. Recently divorced
  - C. Widows or widowers
  - D. Students
  - E. All the above
41. Which of the following are stages in recruitment
  - A. Invitation
  - B. Double blind
  - C. Initial contact
  - D. Peer pressure

E. A & C

F. All of the above

42. Where are cults primarily located?
43. Can a person break from a cult at any time?
44. Can a person be fully free from his cultish experience?
45. Is it important for the cult buster to have a good knowledge of the cult he is assisting the person get free from?
46. Can the blood of Jesus be applied over those who do not want to be saved?
47. Does cultish beliefs usually parallel Christian theology?
48. Can a be hypnotized without their knowledge?
49. Can the average person be swayed by suggestion alone?
50. If a person does not want to be saved, can you still help them?