

Jehovah's Witnesses

Founded by Charles Taze Russell in 1879. Publishing division is called Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

This group is strongly cultic, in both doctrine and mind control practices. No questioning of authority is allowed - a blind faith in the Watchtower is expected. They believe in salvation by works, which basically means they have to go door-knocking on Saturdays.

The founder warned members (repeated by the Watchtower in 1981) not to read the Bible exclusively or readers would revert back to orthodox Christian beliefs quite quickly. To prevent this, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society publishes huge amounts of literature which is compulsory reading for members. (It's also a huge money-spinner for the Watchtower.)

Birthdays and Christmas are not celebrated. Members are not allowed to wear cross jewellery. Tertiary education is strongly discouraged.

There are numerous contradictions in this literature. For example, one scholar found at least 148 changes of official Watchtower doctrine during the eleven years following 1917.

Jehovah's Witnesses think lying is OK if the situation warrants it. It's OK to lie to non-JWs while door-knocking.

Latter-day Saints (Mormons)

Full name Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Started by Joseph Smith in 1830. He was shot dead in a gunfight in 1844 and left over 40 wives, at least seven of whom were still married to other men. Brigham Young led the Mormons until his death in 1877, leaving behind him 27 wives and 56 children.

Unlike Jehovah's Witnesses, this cult wants very much to be accepted as just another Christian denomination. In reality there is a wide gulf between Mormon and Christian beliefs. "Mormon" is a nickname that is accepted by the Latter-day Saints, although they prefer their proper name.

Mormons are easily recognised by their habit of riding bicycles in pairs while wearing suits. They have a strong following in New Zealand amongst Maori and Pacific Islanders.

Mormon history and writings contain a laughable number of false prophecies and contradictions. For example, Alma 46:15 claims believers were called "Christians" but the verse is dated by LDS authorities as supposedly 73BC.

Scientology

Founded by science fiction writer L Ron Hubbard in 1954.

Time Magazine (6 May 1991) called this group the "Cult of Greed and Power." Although Scientology claims to be a religion, Time stated "In reality the church is a hugely profitable global racket that survives by intimidating members and critics in a Mafia-like manner."

Basically, people pay to undergo flawed psychological or intelligence testing, then pay to have information (strangely resembling cheap science fiction) revealed to them. By the time they get to the highest levels they may have paid over US\$400,000.

Scientology claims eight to ten million people have paid to take the courses. Current members number around 600,000 worldwide with active members around 60,000. There are approximately 280 active members in New Zealand.

The New Age Movement

Common practices include acupuncture, astrology, crystal healing, homeopathy, magnetic healing, meditation, reflexology, reiki, reincarnation and yoga.

Groups include Trancendental Meditation, Rudolf Steiner, School of Philosophy and Sri Chinmoy

The New Age Movement has been described as "Hinduism for the West." The movement has no single leader, no definite doctrine, and no single headquarters. It is a write-your-own religion where the practitioner is free to pick and choose any elements they like from a long list including such things as reincarnation and evolution towards godhood.

The New Age Movement is not new, but is probably gaining popularity now because of a post-scientific backlash due to a loss of faith in science being able to provide all the answers to the questions of life.

The New Age Movement is about feeling good about oneself through whatever means the practitioner feels they like. The actual truth is ignored. Indeed, a typical new age statement is "There is no absolute truth." The statement is self-refuting since if there is no absolute truth, then the statement itself cannot be true. Similarly for "Nothing is knowable." Much of the New Age Movement is similarly self-contradictory or soundly refuted by science (eg homeopathy) but practitioners do not care as long as they feel good about it.

Cult Beliefs

Groups are classed as cults in two ways – they use mind control to manipulate and control their members, or because they have serious problems with what they believe. Cults very often qualify on both counts.

If a group claims to be Christian, compatible with Christianity, or to replace Christianity, but get most or all of the five fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith wrong, the group can be considered a cult. These basic errors of belief are:

- Misrepresent who Jesus Christ is, and/or deny the Trinity.
- Deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.
- Deny Jesus Christ's sacrificial atonement (that He paid the penalty for our sin by dying on the cross).
- Deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Deny salvation by grace alone, insisting that some sort of work must be done (normally in the service of the cult).

Christianity is the only religion in the world which offers salvation by grace. All other religions (including cults) would have their adherents try to earn their salvation – impossible to do since any sin completely cuts us off from God.

This pamphlet investigates the main beliefs of some of the cult groups in New Zealand (Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and Scientology) and the New Age Movement, and compares those beliefs with Christianity.

<i>Group</i> <i>Belief</i>	Christianity	Jehovah's Witnesses	Latter-day Saints (Mormons)	Scientology	New Age Movement <small>Particular New Age beliefs vary between New Age groups. These are typical beliefs.</small>
God	One and only god. Creator of everything.	Jehovah.	Named Elohim, he has a body and was once an ordinary man.	We are all god-like eternal beings called Thetans.	We are all gods (we have just forgotten it).
Jesus	The Son of God, God in human form. The only completely good person who has ever lived. Born of the virgin Mary, died on a cross, was bodily resurrected.	A created being, the Archangel Michael. Was not bodily resurrected but returned to Earth invisibly in 1914.	A god who got a body as the result of physical sex between Elohim and Mary. Visited the Americas after he left Palestine. Jesus and Satan are brothers.	Just an ordinary person, no one special. He was not an Operating Thetan but instead "just a shade above clear."	An "enlightened" teacher.
Holy Spirit	Third person of God. Personal ("he" not "it").	An invisible force, like electricity.	Holy Spirit is the fluid-like substance God uses to do things. Holy Ghost is another god, with his own body.	Does not exist.	Replaced by the life force of the universe.
Trinity	One God, three persons.	A pagan idea.	A pagan idea.	A false idea created by movies shown to our souls 75,000,000 years ago.	No such thing.
Salvation	Salvation is through grace. Jesus lived a sinless life so was able to pay the ultimate price that we are all due to pay. We only have to accept that he did that for us.	Salvation by works, by going door-to-door. Inaccurate concept of sin.	We can become gods just like Elohim did (if we work hard enough). Women can only be saved after death if their husbands call them from beyond the grave. Women are to be pregnant for eternity populating their own planet (like Eve did).	Freedom from reincarnation. To do this members slowly work their way up through multiple levels, learning more and more "stuff" that would resemble cheap science fiction if they were still enough in control of their mental faculties to recognise it as such, paying what may amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars as they go.	Oneness with the universe is achieved by meditation, etc, which helps to block any negative (rational) thoughts.
Hell	An eternal lake of fire prepared for the devil, the fallen angels, and everyone who rejects Jesus Christ as saviour.	Doesn't exist since non-righteous souls are destroyed.	Outer darkness is reserved for apostate (fallen away) Mormons.	A myth.	No such thing.
The Christian Church	The (future) Bride of Christ.	Of the Devil.	"The great whore of Babylon."	Unofficially, something to be destroyed.	Just another religion.
The Bible	The Word of God. Inspired directly by God.	Have their own (extremely inaccurate) version. Even so, it's not understandable without JW study guides.	OK as far as it has been translated correctly, but their <i>Book of Mormon</i> is "the most correct of any book on Earth." (<i>BoM</i> has had over 4,000 word and doctrine changes since the 1830 edition.)	Contains lies based on movies that were shown to our souls 75 million years ago.	Just a book.
Unique aspects	Grace. The only religion to offer salvation as a free gift, the only religion where God reaches down to people, because we can't reach God due to our sinful state.	Believe that God's true and only name is Jehovah – a name actually invented by a Roman Catholic monk named Raymundus in AD1270.	Wear special underwear with symbols for spiritual protection. The <i>Book of Mormon</i> has its own familiar spirit. Baptism for the dead.	The name of the galactic ruler 75,000,000 years ago was Xenu. He used hydrogen bombs against his enemies. He was caught and is still alive today.	Reincarnation in one of the most common beliefs of the New Age. Since the world's population is steadily increasing all these extra human souls must have come from animals and insects who worked off a lot of their karma.