

# WORLD RELIGIONS

## Week 6

# CULTS AND THE OCCULT

## CULTS

Cult – a group of people polarized around someone’s interpretation of the Bible and is characterized by major deviations from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christiana faith, particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ. (From Walter Martin’s *Kingdom of the Cults*)

### Reasons People Join Cults

Cults provide answers.  
Cults meet human needs.  
Cults make a favourable impression.

### Characteristics of Cults

Claim to provide ‘New Truth’.  
A non-biblical source of authority.  
A non-biblical Jesus.  
Rejection of orthodox Christianity.  
Double-talk.  
A non-biblical teaching of the nature of God (reject idea of Trinity).  
Changing theology.  
Strong leadership.  
Salvation by works.  
False prophesy.

### MORMONISM

God the Father is now a glorified and perfected man.  
Man’s destiny is to evolve to Godhood as Jesus Christ did.  
Man’s rebellion against God was necessary.

### JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

Deny: the Trinity, deity of Christ, personality of Holy Spirit, biblical view of atonement, bodily resurrection of Christ, salvation by faith alone.  
Atonement was a ransom paid to Jehovah by Jesus Christ.  
Only 144,000 will go to heaven.  
Four requirements for salvation: right knowledge, obey the Law, be JW, witness.

### CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

God is a divine principle, not a Supreme Being.  
Jesus was the perfect Christian Scientist.  
Salvation is from one’s own belief in materiality.

### UNITARIANISM

Deny Trinity, God is one.  
Humanistic, nature and reason replaced NT as religious source of authority.

### ADVENTISM

Doctrine of ‘Investigative Judgement’.  
Seventh-day Sabbatarianism.

# OCCULT

Occult – (from Latin *occultus* meaning ‘hidden’) may be defined as any practice to do with the supernatural that is forbidden in the Bible or is self-evidentially evil. It is most often used to describe any attempt to gain supernatural knowledge or power apart from the God of the Bible.

## Characteristics of the Occult

1. The disclosure and communication of information unavailable to humans through normal means (beyond the five senses).
2. The placing of persons in contact with supernatural powers, paranormal energies, or demonic forces.
3. The acquisition and mastery of power in order to manipulate or influence other people into certain actions.

Three types of occult activity: divination, magic and spiritualism.

## DIVINATION

Divination is a generic term for attempting to foretell or explore the future, and to shape our lives according to what is coming. Someone who practices divination is called a fortune-teller. Many forms of divination exist: astrology, fortune-telling, horoscopes, Tarot cards, Crystal balls, palm reading, rod and pendulum, tea leaf reading, dice and dominoes, Daoist book of *I Ching*, shells, telepathy, clairvoyance, dreams, numerology.

## MAGIC

Basic Beliefs: no creed, tolerance, relativism, multiple realities.

Three Pillars: animism, pantheism, polytheism.

Wicca – ‘the craft of the wise’.

Church of Satan – a religion that mixes hedonistic philosophy with black magic.

## SPIRITUALISM

A religion with church services consisting of hymns, prayers, spoken message and séances.

## Questions for Discussion

1. You are on a long train journey and you find out that the stranger sitting next to you is a Jehovah’s Witness. You want to change seats but the train is full. When the person starts talking to you about Jehovah how would you explain the difference between the Jehovah of the Christian Bible and the Jehovah of the Witnesses?
2. Your next door neighbours have started attending meetings of a Wicca coven. How would you try to convince them that all witchcraft is evil?
3. Your friend’s mother died. She claims to be a Christian but dearly wants to be able to ask her Mom for forgiveness for something bad she did to her while she was alive. How would you counsel your friend?