

SPECIAL INTERLUDE ON CULTS
"Using John 1:1-18 As A Quick CRIB SHEET On The Cults"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In recent weeks, several different parties in our Church have asked me for insight on questionable religious groups they face:

(1) Following a gathering at which a number of us at Nepaug attended outside of Nepaug Church itself, I talked with different parties about the beliefs of those hosting the gathering, and had to run off copies explaining my reasons for a pastor in another church. Our Board Meeting briefly discussed the beliefs that were involved.

(2) Last Sunday, in our adult Sunday School class, someone asked me for information on the Masonic Lodge, wondering what they as a group believed.

(3) Another pastor called me a few weeks ago in connection to a study he has been commissioned to do on the role of women in Church leadership. Apparently, his fellowship of churches is collecting information on this topic as it is the current hot topic in Evangelical circles. I lent the pastor involved some Bibliotheca Sacra scholarly periodicals published by Dallas Seminary for his studies.

(4) This same role-of-women-in-church issue has hit the Seminary of the East, an Evangelical group that trains ministers. The seminary's History professor who is the father of a friend of my daughter's recently told me that his faculty is pretty well split down the center on whether or not women should be leading men in the Church!

(5) I was with several other people from Nepaug Church in a meeting late last summer in which the service began to turn pretty different in its expression than what we admit at Nepaug. The music got quite loud, people were standing and swaying with the beat and lifting their hands. After the service, I told one of the Nepaugers with me that I could not allow that exercise at Nepaug lest it promote false beliefs contrary to our beliefs and to the Word of God. He agreed!

So, in view of the exposure we are having as of late to many erroneous beliefs, and in view of the CONFUSION that often reigns as to what is the TRUTH, we have a need. "How can somebody like me who does NOT have Bible school training effectively and QUICKLY DISCERN whether a group or party's beliefs are *cultic* or NOT?" Is there a "crib sheet" I can use for help here?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Whether I meet religious parties at my door, at work or in what turns out to be a unique church meeting, I need a 'crib sheet' to tell QUICKLY if I'm dealing with a cultic error! Any ideas?!"

- I. **John's Gospel came decades after Christ arose when John had time to reflect on Christ's life, B.K.C.,N.T., p. 267; Morris, John, p. 45. During those years, serious cultic opposition arose leaving John with the tendency to write an apologetic, Ibid., B.K.C.,N.T., p. 268.**
- II. **Thus, by introducing the reader to Jesus, John 1:1-18 offers an apologetic in a nutshell that we may use as a QUICK "crib sheet":**
 - A. John 1:1 teaches God exists opposite the denial of **Atheism**.
 - B. John 1:1 teaches a plurality of Persons in one divine essence, implying the existence of the Trinity opposite its denial by several groups:
 1. John 1:1 states that the Word, Whom John defines as Jesus Christ in John 1:14 & 17 was **BOTH *with* God and ALSO was God.**
 2. *Thus, there is a plurality of Persons in the Godhead along with a unity of divinity as they are one God, not several Gods!*
 3. John 1:1 thereby counters the anti-Trinitarian assertions of **Islam** (Mohammed), **unbiblical Judaism**, **Christian Scientists** (Mary Baker Eddy), **Freemasonry** (J. D. Buck, M.D., Symbolism of Mystic Masonry, p. 57), **Jehovah's Witnesses**, **Witness Lee** (Witness Lee, "The Clear Scriptural Revelation Concerning the Triune God," p. 2-5), Rev. Moon's Unification Church [**Moonies**] (source: Moody Monthly, July-Aug., 1977), **The Way** (Victor Paul Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God) and **Unitarianism**.
 - C. John 1:1 with 1:14 and 1:17 teaches that Jesus Christ is **God** opposite the *denials* of this statement *mainly* by the **Jehovah's Witnesses**:
 1. The Jehovah's Witnesses teach that since there is **no definite** article before the **last** word, "God" in John 1:1, John meant Jesus was "**A god**" (B. Metzger, The Jehovah's Witnesses & Jesus Christ, p. 75).
 2. Well, Dr. Ernest Colwell, Univ. of Chicago, in 1933 wrote that **in Greek**, "A definite predicate nominative **has** the article when it *follows* the verb; it does **not** have the article when it *precedes* the verb..." (Journal/Biblical Lit., LII, p. 12-21, cited in Metzger, loc. cit.) John 1:1 has "God" **preceding** the verb, so there is **no** article!
 3. Also, if one holds the "**a god**" translation, by way of John's theological intent in context, one then affirms **polytheism**, a belief in **many gods** opposite Jehovah Witness doctrine, Ibid., Metzger!
 4. Besides, John 20:28 record's Thomas' confession of Jesus as "My Lord and my God", reflecting that John **meant** Jesus was **the** God!

- D. John 1:3 (with 1:14, 17) teaches that Christ is the Creator God of all creatures opposite the beliefs of **Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Islam, Freemasonry, The Way and Liberal Theology**:
1. For emphasis, John states **both positively and negatively** that Jesus Christ created all that was ever created, John 1:3 (with 1:1, 14, 17).
 2. Since it is impossible for one to create **himself**, Jesus was not created, and hence is the **Eternal and Creator God** of all things.
 3. Thus, the belief that Jesus was created (esp. Mormonism) errs!
- E. John 1:6-8 asserts that John the Baptizer, though sent from God, was himself **not** the Christ in opposition to beliefs of **Christian Scientists, Liberal Theology** and **Watchman Nee** (Nee, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, p. 15, 18, 20-22, 33): though he was a **righteous** man so that **God had sent him**, the Apostle **denies** that John had divinity in him!
- F. John 1:10-11, opposite **Liberal Theology**, denies that all men will be saved, for much of the world **rejects** faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- G. John 1:12-13 teaches salvation is by God's work apart from man's opposite beliefs in **Freemasonry, Roman Catholicism, the Moonies, Mormonism, Christian Science, Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Theological Liberalism**. Freemasonry denies Christ's atonement, saying, "Did Jesus count Himself, conceive of Himself as a proprietary sacrifice and His work as an expiation? The only answer possible is, clearly, He did **not** . . ." (Milton Steward, *Symbolic Teaching on Masonry . . .*, p. 177 as cited in H. R. Taylor's testimony, *Bib. Evan.*).
- H. John 1:16-17 denies that the believer needs more fullness from God as **Watchman Nee** and *many Charismatics* teach, cf. Ephesians 1:3.
- I. John 1:17, opposite the teachings of **Judaism** and much of **Roman Catholicism**, states God's grace in Christ supersedes the Mosaic Law.
- J. John 1:18, versus what **Islam, Mormonism** and **Reverend Moon** say, shows that man needs no further prophet or messiah after Jesus Christ:
1. The word "declared" (KJV) or "made him known" (NIV) is from *exaygeomai*, *UBS Greek N.T.*, p. 322. It means "to exegete" (*B.K.C., N.T.*, p. 273) so that Jesus, the Son of God Who alone has seen the Father in His fullness has also exegeted Him to man, John 1:17. There is therefore no further exegesis of God needed.
 2. Thus, the groups named above err in asserting that man needed a prophet or messiah after Jesus for a fuller revelation of God!

Lesson Application: *John 1:1-18 supplies a QUICK "crib sheet" for discerning cults. Hence, (1) believe on Christ to be saved (Jn. 1:12), (2) receiving thereby God's full salvation and spirit blessings (1:16). (3) Then we use John 1:1-18 as a QUIC K test for error about us!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

When the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are known for their great discipline and skills as officers are trained to detect **counterfeit** money, one might think that they are sat down in a classroom and given an extensive lecture on the ways of counterfeiters.

That is not the case, for counterfeiters always seem to change their efforts to pass the bills among the unwary. Taking a class on counterfeit procedures thus is pointless, for soon the counterfeiters would come up with a new way to deceive even "mounties" if possible!

Those who train these officers have found the best way to equip them is to put the "mounties" in a room with **real** money, and tell them to handle it. And that is **all** they do. For days, they do sit around counting, bending and folding **real** money.

After doing so, the instant a **counterfeit** bill comes their way, these **trained** "mounties" are so tuned to the **true** bills that they sense that the false money is **different**, and send it to the lab for evaluation!

Scripture tells us to follow the SAME procedure when it comes to overcoming errant beliefs. Paul writes in Romans 16:18 (NIV) of deceivers: ". . . by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people." Then, to handle that deception, Paul says, "(v. 19) . . . but I want Y OU [believers] to be WISE about what is GOOD, and INNOCENT about what is EVIL."

In other words, if we stay preoccupied with SCRIPTURE, we will be able to spot cultic error a mile away when we come across it! Specifically, If we spend time in John 1:1-18, a marvelous QUICK apologetic that states the TRUTH about the BASICS of our Christian faith, that exposure under the Holy Spirit's discerning influence (1 Jn. 2:20, 27) will AUTOMATICALLY equip us to pick out cultic errors once we are exposed to them!

[After the New Year, I will **do an eight-part, more in-depth series on those cults that most affect us. However, I would hope that we read John 1:1-18 repeatedly BEFORE then as a protective preparation for this series. Then we can be EQUIPPED to spot these cultic errors even as I reveal and contradict their beliefs with the true in that sermon series!**]