

The Kingdom of the Cults: An Analysis of the Major Cult Systems In the Present Christian Era, Walter Martin, Bethany House/ Welch, 1981, Thirtieth Printing; 443 pp.

Dr. Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults* is not just another book on the avalanche of sects and cults. It has been reprinted 30 times and was revised in 1977. Because this book is dated, the current developments in the traditional sects and the latest arrivals on the sect and cult scene are not discussed. This is unfortunate.

The purpose of the volume is to awaken interest in evangelizing members of sects and cults, to point out the flaws in their systems, to provide pertinent information for the Christian and to familiarize the reader with the cardinal truths of the gospel. To achieve these aims the rise of the sects and cults in North America is analyzed, and the major teachings of these movements are theologically evaluated and contrasted with historical biblical theology, with an emphasis on exegesis and doctrine.

How do we approach members of sects and cults with the gospel?. We must see them as Individuals who are in need of the Saviour. A Christian may never be out just to win an argument. He must familiarize himself to some extent with the terminology of the major sect and cult systems. He should also realize that sects and cults re-define standard theological terms. They manipulate Christian terminology and borrow liberally from the Bible - almost always out of context. They rarely discuss the essential problem of evil, the existence of personal sin, or the necessity of the atonement of Christ as the sole means of salvation.

Why the rise of the sect and cult influence? Dr. Martin gives three reasons. First, the church's woeful delinquency in the exercise of evangelism. Second, the lack of doctrinal knowledge. Third, the average Christian's inability to document the why of his belief from scripture. Hence, the need for doctrinal preaching and teaching.

I do have a few disagreements with the author. He advocates prayers as an evangelistic tool. About his meeting with Jehovah's Witnesses he writes: "During my opening and closing prayers I would totally preach the gospel, emphasizing the deity of Christ, his death for our sins, the certainty of knowing that we have eternal life now, by faith in him and that salvation comes by grace alone, independent of human works. I would profusely quote the scriptures, and in actuality by preaching a three-minute sermonette, subliminally implanting the true gospel of Jesus Christ and, I might add, blissfully uninterrupted." I don't believe that prayer is meant to make announcements or to preach a gospel message. In prayer we address God in praise, confession and petition.

Furthermore, Dr. Martin's charge that in the Philippines Christianity is caricatured as "the white man's religion" is mistaken. Folk Catholicism is viewed by Filipinos as part of their heritage and culture. Dr. Martin's definition of cults is too narrow. He says that "a cult might also be defined as a group of people gathered about a specific person or person's interpretation of the Bible." In today's situation, this definition applies more directly to the sects which have a Christian origin. Cults are those movements that have their roots in non-Christian religions and cultures.

However, I do believe that this book will remain a standard text for the study of Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Mormonism, Spiritism, Father Divine, The Theosophical Society, Zen Buddhism, Swedenborgianism, Bahá'í, The Black Muslims, The Unity School of Christianity, Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God and Seventh Day Adventism. I wholeheartedly recommend the volume to anyone who wants to make a thorough study of these traditional sects and how to approach them.

Dr. Walter Martin is a Reformed Baptist who earned his doctoral degree at the California Western University in the field of Comparative Religions and has authored a dozen full-length books, six booklets, and numerous articles. He is also the founder and director of The Christian Research Institute located in Anaheim, California, which provides those interested with up-to-date information on the sect and cult movements.

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