

WORLD
RELIGIONS
AND
CULTS

The title 'WORLD RELIGIONS AND CULTS' is presented in a large, bold, sans-serif font. The word 'WORLD' is at the top, with a black silhouette of a snake coiled around the letter 'O'. Below it, 'RELIGIONS' features a Buddha silhouette on the 'I', an Eye of Providence in a triangle on the 'O', and a fedora hat on the 'I'. The word 'AND' is in the middle, with a silhouette of a person performing a balancing act on the 'D'. Finally, 'CULTS' has a star on the 'C', a cross on the 'T', and a yin-yang symbol on the 'S'. All symbols are black silhouettes.

Moralistic, Mythical
and Mysticism Religions

Volume 2

General Editors

BODIE HODGE &
ROGER PATTERSON

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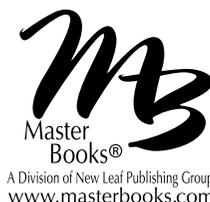
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Introduction

Bodie Hodge

There are only two religions in the world. We reaffirm this in our second volume of *World Religions and Cults* as we continue to look at religious philosophies based on man's ideas and moralistic systems.

The two religions are God's and man's. God has only revealed one religion and it is the true religion because God is the truth and knows all things. So to have a proper understanding of truth and the one true religion would be to look at religion from the perspective of God (by looking at the 66 books of the Bible).

If a religion doesn't come from God, then it comes from man. This can occur in many ways; a group or individuals (e.g., ancient sages over time), a leading religious person (e.g., Confucius, Buddha), a king or ruler, or even through Satan and demons. But in any case, development of a religion requires the involvement of man. Sometimes the religion morphs into something different by later adherents, taking variant forms, or splintering into various sects.

All man-made religions are deviations from God's Word. They have used man's ideas to supersede God's Word. In other words and usually subtly, man is really seen as the supreme god sitting in authority over the true God. These religions of man are dubbed "humanistic" since they go back to the mind of man or a *human*. As Christians, we should not fear them.

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And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28).¹

There are a lot of variations of man's religion that can be broken in hosts of smaller religions. We have divided them by types similar to the way Christian philosopher and pastor Dr. Greg Bahnsen has done.

The religious divisions we are using for the book are:

- Counterfeits of Christianity — religions that look or act much like Christianity but deviate from the truth in some way, like Mormonism, Islam, Satanism, etc.
- Moralistic Religions — religions that teach a moral code that have no god, like Buddhism or Confucianism, or if they do have “gods” they are only slightly above humanity, like some forms of paganism and mythologies
- Mystical Religions — Eastern thought like Hinduism, Taoism, Sikhism, or New Age
- Materialistic/Atheistic Religions — secular humanism, atheism, agnosticism, hedonism, Epicureanism, etc.

Moralistic and Mysticism Religions

Volume 2 of *World Religions and Cults* focuses on moralistic and mysticism religions. This volume includes pagan religions like Greek mythology, witchcraft, and Druidism. Each is making a comeback in our Western world as people search for meaning in the world.

Some religions could have been included like Baal (Belus/Nimrod) worship, which was common in the days of the Old Testament. Baal worship was a blight that Israel often suffered when they rejected God's Word.

But this volume includes chapters of several other pagan systems that may be more relevant than Baal worship, like Egyptian mythology, Roman mythology, and Germanic/Norse mythology. These are having more of a comeback than Baal worship, though they have similar pagan styles. If you can refute one, then you can often refute others since they are based on the same false foundation.

1. All Scripture in this chapter is from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

Other moralistic religions are Buddhism and Confucianism. These are probably the largest forms of organized moralistic religions. However, there are a lot of moralistic religions and many of these are unaffiliated.

One moralistic religion that could have been placed in this volume is secular humanism. It has a famous moral code (the various Humanist Manifestos) but no god. Since many secular humanists identify themselves as atheistic or agnostic, we opted to put it in the materialistic/atheistic section for volume 3.

As mentioned in the previous volume, some religions could rightly be lumped into more than one category. The chapter on Unitarianism that appears in this volume could have fit into volume 1 (Counterfeits of Christianity). There are some forms of Unitarianism (Oneness Pentecostalism, for example) that make it a counterfeit of Christianity. But the Unitarian churches have departed to the extent that they have become a moralistic religion.

Mystical religions include religious thought that often migrate from the East — Hinduism, New Age, Jainism, Taoism, Sikhism, and the like. They tend to deviate from reason, focusing on mystical experiences to understand the truth. These tend to be religions that have much similarity but they are packaged in different ways or have branched off from a common source.

Be sure to read the overview of moralistic and mystical religions at the beginning of each section to gain a better understanding of the types of religions they encompass. The overviews also show how their truth claims are refuted. But keep in mind the big picture as you read this volume: there are only two religions — the right one and the wrong one (that is manifest in many ways). In all of these, they are dependent upon a man or group of people who founded them, maintained them, and modified them. They are ultimately all humanistic religions — the religion of man.

Refutation Style

Refutations of these religions could be done in several ways. Any one refutation is sufficient to disprove a false worldview. Paul writes:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and

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the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Timothy 3:16–4:4).

All refutations of false worldviews must be predicated on the Word of God. It is God who does the refuting.

Arbitrariness

The authors have tried to show where each religion is arbitrary, which is not a good thing in debate or philosophical argument. Arbitrariness includes things like opinions or ideas based on the experience of one individual. If someone is of the opinion that the Constitution of the United States is actually an ice cream cone in the sky, then should that position be taken as truth? No. It is just an opinion.

Other forms of arbitrariness are conjecture, relativism, or unargued bias. Though I don't want to get too technical here, these are all forms of arbitrariness. A worldview or religion that is based on arbitrary ideas has no foundation or ultimate source of authority — it can't be shown to be superior to any other system. Arbitrariness is a fatal flaw in any worldview. Only biblical Christianity offers a non-arbitrary worldview with God as its ultimate source.

Inconsistency

If something is inconsistent, then it is a problem for a worldview. This is where logical fallacies come into play when refuting worldviews. If an argument has fallacies (formal or informal fallacies), then it is a bad argument.

Sometimes people are inconsistent by acting in a way that is contrary to what they say they believe. This is called a behavioral inconsistency. For example, if someone says they view all things in the universe as one but then they don't want a thief to steal their car, they are acting in an inconsistent way! After all, they and the thief would ultimately be the same since they are one with the universe, so why oppose the theft if you are just giving something to yourself?

Reduced to Absurdity

Another form of inconsistency could almost be placed in its own section. It is when you show where an argument leads if it were held in a consistent manner and applied to all aspects of reality. If the basic argument used in a worldview leads to absurdity, then it is inconsistent. Let's take the Taoists for example, who hold that all of the universe is one. They argue that Taoism is correct and Christianity is false. But within their own beliefs, all of reality is one, so Taoism and Christianity are one and the same, which is absurd.

Preconditions

Many religions do not realize that their worldview cannot account for the most fundamental aspects of reality. For example, people in many religions do not know why they wear clothes. Christians wear clothes because of the events of the Garden of Eden and the entrance of sin into God's perfect creation. Clothing covers the shame of nakedness introduced when Adam sinned, having his shame covered by the animals sacrificed to cover his sin (Genesis 3:21).

Many religions fail at explaining a host of these basic aspects of reality. A way to test a religion is to ask, within their professed story (worldview), how do we know that logic, truth, knowledge, or love exist? In the Hindu perception, all of reality is masked with illusion (*maya*). If this is true, all knowledge is illusion. So how can one even know that knowledge exists in the Hindu worldview?

In the materialistic worldview of many atheists, they claim all things are material (some expression of matter/energy). But the laws of logic have no mass or energy — they are immaterial — so logic is impossible to account for in their worldview even though they must use it to argue for their beliefs.

The Bible, with God as its ultimate author, accounts for all of these foundations of reality and gives a basis for such preconditions. Other worldviews fall short of these preconditions. They often *borrow* from God's Word but don't realize it. These refutations will be used from time to time throughout this volume to help you understand how to expose the false foundations.

Understanding the falsehoods can help you point people to the truth of the Bible and the hope that you have in Christ as Creator and Savior. The ultimate goal is not to simply dismantle someone's worldview, but to call them to build on the solid foundation of the triune God of the Bible.

Chapter 1

Eastern Mysticism Religions: The Overview

Bodie Hodge and Roger Patterson

Imagine seeing a person who has no clothes lying along the road, having been beaten, robbed of everything, and left for dead. Christians might recall the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37) and honor God and their fellow man by helping the helpless. However, many people in mystical religions like Taoism or Hinduism may simply respond by “letting them be.” Why?

In many forms of mystical thought, the person is getting what they deserve due to “karma” from a previous life. So it is not acceptable for someone to get involved and disrupt the karmic cycle by interfering with the consequences the person is experiencing. If the destitute person dies, they will be reincarnated for a type of “do over.” By this reasoning, death isn’t a big deal in the mind of the mystic. This is also the thinking reflected in those who would refuse to associate with or give aid to the “untouchable” caste within Eastern societies — bringing bad karma upon themselves for interfering.

Besides that, in the grand scheme of these mystical religions lies a concept that teaches nothing is real but is actually an *illusion*. It is called *maya* in Hinduism but has similar counterparts in other mystical religions. If we take this thinking to its natural conclusion, there really was no person who

was injured, and you don't exist either, since all is an illusion and not the ultimate reality. This adds another level of confusion about the true nature of reality to Eastern mysticism.

Mystical Religions: Beliefs and Types

When people hear of Eastern religions they typically think of yoga, enlightenment, karma, oneness of being, reincarnation, and mystical contemplation and meditation. They may also think of the many gods in these religions. There are quite a few forms of Eastern mysticism, though Hinduism is surely the largest and most commonly seen in Western cultures.

There are also variants like Hare Krishna, which can be considered a “denomination” of Hinduism. In Hinduism, like some others, the gods are really just manifestations of one impersonal, universal force, Brahman (this is why Hinduism is often called Brahmanism in older literature).

Other forms of mysticism include Taoism (also known as Daoism) where their ultimate impersonal god is termed “Ultimate Reality.” Another popular mysticism religion is the New Age movement. New Age is now progressing across the Western world much the way secular humanism (think atheism, agnosticism, evolutionism) has spread across Europe and North America.

Even Jainism is based in Eastern thought, having elements of Buddhism while retaining similarities with Hinduism. Any notion of a supreme god in these religions is *impersonal*.

There are similarities and differences among each of these variant mystical religions (as you can read in the chapters following). Mystical religions, unlike moralistic religions that will be discussed later in the book, go beyond human experience and rationality. So what does that mean? It means that they defy human experience and defy logic as fundamental aspects of reality.

Defying logic and experience might seem strange, but it is the norm in this way of thought. But this is apparent when we think of the notion of *maya* — that everything we experience is an illusion and not the ultimate reality. Even logic is an illusion, as are your experiences, in religions like Hinduism, Taoism, and Hare Krishna.

They teach that the problem with all of us is that we are blinded by this illusion to think there are distinctions, when in fact there is no distinction between anything. The logical person will obviously point out that there are

distinctions based on their experiences (i.e., there is a distinction between a cat and a dog).

But the mystical mind would deny this. They would argue that both cat and dog are an illusion and we mistakenly think (based on our experiences) that there is a distinction. The mystic would say these are all just manifestations of the oneness that exists as the true reality (e.g., these are all emanations of Brahman in Hinduism).

This is why yoga and mystical meditation are required to move beyond experience and dive into the ideas that defy reason and experience. Thus, they argue that when you have entered deep enough into the mystical understanding that you can achieve the final state of bliss. The goal of life is to achieve nothingness, moksha, or nirvana¹ as you are spliced back into the oneness of being — “like a drop of water reentering the ocean of being.”

If you have not achieved this perfect level at your death, then you are doomed to keep repeating life at a higher reincarnate level (come back as a human again) or lower level (e.g., come back as an animal or plant). This is done through stages of reincarnations, based on your good or bad karma, until you finally reach this state.

So the goal in many mystical religions is to stop drawing distinctions so that you can move up the reincarnation chain to finally get to nothingness. There are variations in the religions mentioned, but in the generalized sense, this is the basic goal of all mystical religions.

Arbitrariness

When we consider the validity of a religious worldview, the first question we need to ask is, “On whose authority do mystics know about their religion and its beliefs?” Did their impersonal god reveal the truth to mankind? No. The very notion of an impersonal god communicating to man is a logical contradiction — communication is an interpersonal act. They *do* have religious books, like the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, etc. But these are not revelations from God to man as the Bible is.²

Instead, these religious books are merely the ideas or wisdom of ancients on the subject. Essentially, they are just the writings of man to recount old

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1. These are just different names for essentially the same thing, depending on which Eastern religion is being discussed.
 2. The Bible is not just written by men but *inspired by God* while using human authors to write the inspired text of Scripture.

philosophies. They often disagree with each other, but that is the flavor of writings of mere men.

These ideas all originate in the mind of man or are expressed through man (if they have a supernatural demonic origin). Thus, they are humanistic in their outlook.³ The ideas of man are arbitrary next to the absolute standard of the Word of God, the Bible. The Bible comes with the authority of the *absolute authority*, God. The ideas promoted in the Vedas or Upanishads are just opinions of man. These opinions are arbitrary, having no ultimate source of authority.

In bold terms, “*so what*” if these ancients believed this mystical philosophy. Just because they believed it doesn’t make it true any more than someone believing George Washington (the first president of the United States) was a green mushroom!

If one argues that these sages of old were exceptionally wise, then by what standard are they wise? The modern mystics? That again would be an arbitrary opinion. If someone came to me and said, “George Washington was a green mushroom,” I would merely point out that their assertion is merely arbitrary and has no grounding in reality.

If they retort, “I heard this from someone who was exceptionally wise,” does that really hold water? No. It is still arbitrary and thus a false premise upon which to base any argumentation.

If we consider any of the beliefs within these mystical systems, each is based on the opinion or idea of a mere man. For example, how does a Hindu or Taoist *know* he will be reincarnated? He doesn’t. It is an arbitrary assumption that forms a belief.

Inconsistencies

There are also many inconsistencies with mysticism religions that allow us to see their false character. Consider just a few. Let’s start with knowledge (in technical terms, this is “epistemology”). If all we experience is illusion, then knowledge is too. One can’t consistently know anything in this religious system. To claim to know something based on experience would be to affirm that it is not illusory — a self-refuting position.

But it is just gets worse from here. No believer in Eastern mysticism can know anything about their religion if their religion is what it claims to be.

3. This reveals that there are indeed only two religions — God’s and man’s. All forms of mysticism are from the mind of man or part of the variations of man’s religion.

Here is why. Their supreme god is *impersonal*. Since their god is impersonal, then it is impossible for that god to communicate to man, who is *personal*. This alleged supreme god couldn't use language, which is based on personal human experience. There can be no revelation *of any sort* to mankind to know anything about this alleged god. It would be inconsistent for any follower of Eastern mysticism to claim to know anything about their professed religion.

The mystic might argue that Brahman is impersonal but has an aspect where he⁴ can be able to manifest as personal at certain times or as certain manifestations (as Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva). But that would be a logical contradiction, as he would be both personal (relating to these other gods who have emanated from him) and impersonal at the same time and same instance as there is ultimately no distinction between Brahman and the personal manifestations. Besides, an impersonal Brahman cannot decide to manifest himself as personal, as decision making is personal in the first place.

The mystic might say that they can learn about their supreme god (Brahman, Ultimate Reality, etc.) based on utilizing the world in which we live. That also proves nothing since it is all supposed to be an illusion.

Another inconsistency is derived on their doctrine of *all being one* — that there is no distinction. Recall that our problem in mystical religions is that we draw distinctions. This is why we remain in the world of maya or illusion instead of entering into a nirvana, Moksha, or blissful state.

But here is the problem: in the Eastern mystical reality, there would be no distinction between the illusory and blissful states. So making the statement that they are distinct is self-refuting. Let's put it this way: if one argues that there is no distinction and that our problem is that we draw distinction, and they argue this by drawing distinctions, then that is illogical.

Just tell the mystical adherents that you are already in the state of bliss — what are they going to do — draw a distinction to say you aren't? Similarly, in Buddhism, and its variations, the goal is to rid one's self of all desires. So, you must desire to rid yourself of all desires to be released from being — a logical contradiction.

When one dies, who is the judge that determines if they had enough good or bad karma to know where and in what condition or form they will be reincarnated? Judging is a personal attribute, so their impersonal god cannot be the judge.

4. Brahman is viewed as a genderless force, but we will use a masculine pronoun here for ease of communication.

Another inconsistency is exhibited in the mystical believer's personal life. If *all is one* and *there is no distinction*, do they live in a manner consistent with that claim? No. If a Hindu says that *all is one* and *there is no distinction*, a good thing to ask for is . . . their wallet.

Would they give their money to you? No. But you could respond by staying, "I am you," since "all is one." You could go on and point out that the money is actually yours since the two of you are actually one as part of the principle of Brahman. If the mystic argues, just point out that they should stop drawing the distinction between you and them.

You need to understand that the mystical mind says one thing and lives their life another way. The believer of Hinduism or New Age or Taoism goes home and kisses their spouse as though they were real and distinct from other people's spouses. They handle their money as though it were real and distinct from someone else's money. Their lives are a walking inconsistency.

If a mystic resists the idea of converting to Christianity, ask them to consider this: if all is one and there is no distinction, then the mystic might as well become a Christian, since there is no distinction.

But remember, we pointed out that the Eastern mystical religions are not rational, i.e., they defy logic. As you talk with them, the mystic may respond by saying they are not bound to the laws of logic, so inconsistencies are acceptable in their religion since *all is one* — thus, logic and non-logic are one and the same.

If a mystic like a Hindu, New Ager, or Taoist says such a thing, just contradict them and point out that "they do believe in logic." What can they do? Would they appeal to logic (e.g., law of non-contradiction) to say that you contradicted what they just said (that they don't believe in logic)? That is inconsistent.

Borrowing from God's Word

The mystical mind cannot account for knowledge, logic, or even a single aspect of their professed religion because it is marred with inconsistencies and arbitrariness. Even the lives of many mystics are plagued with inconsistencies within their professed religion.

Yet many held captive by these religions *do* believe in logic and that knowledge exists. They believe their wives or husbands are real and have distinction from any random person. They love their kids. But why?

The answer is because they are borrowing from a biblical worldview and don't realize it. Many of these doctrines were passed down from creation, through the Flood and Tower of Babel and are still retained today — even couched in many religions around the globe.

Man is made in the image of a personal God; this is why we are personal. We are made in the image of a logical God who knows all things. Thus, we are in a position to be logical and to know things. The Bible accounts for why things exist and have distinction — God created them.

The Hindu or Taoist understands that shame and love and dignity and honor exist. Yet these things should not exist, as they are merely illusions of experience in their worldview. But they are real concrete entities in the biblical worldview.

Consider memory. If all is illusion, then how can an Eastern mystic trust their memories? According to their worldview, they cannot. They cannot know that morality is a reality either.

Eastern religions cannot account for absolute morality, as there is no absolute lawgiver who communicated to mankind (thus, a personal God) that morality exists. For all the Hindu, Taoist, etc. knows, the correct path may have nothing to do with being *good enough* or *knowing enough*, as that can be an illusion, and being *bad and not knowing* may be how you move up a caste. In many respects, the adherents hold to some levels of morality. But why? It is because the law of God is written on their hearts. It is from the Christian viewpoint that morality makes sense.

When it comes down to it, the mystical worldviews cannot hold up to a Christian worldview that makes sense of knowledge, logic, truth, morality, memory, dignity, love, honor, and so forth. If the mystic wants to be logical and rational, they must give up mystical religions and move to the biblical position.

Conclusion

The mystical religions recognize there is a problem in the world and have devised all manner of works to seek to bring balance and harmony. We heartily agree. There *is* a problem in the world, but it doesn't have anything to do with drawing distinctions. It has to do with sin. When the mutual ancestors of us all, Adam and Eve, sinned in Genesis 3, the perfect world God had created became corrupt, and death and suffering came into the perfect creation as a result.

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But Jesus Christ, who is the personal God (John 20:27–29), stepped into history to become a man (John 1:1–14; Philippians 2:8) to rescue us from sin and death where an eternal death, or second death, awaits (death is the punishment for our sin — Romans 6:23). Christ took the punishment we deserve on the Cross and died the death we deserved for sin (Colossians 2:13–14) and rose from the dead to demonstrate He had overcome death (Acts 10:40). God offers the free gift of salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ alone to attain heaven (Romans 5:15–18) where we will consciously be with God and His goodness and blessing for all eternity (1 Corinthians 2:9).

It is because we have been saved that we take the message of salvation to others. We want to help rescue unbelievers (those who don't believe in Jesus [yet]), even those trapped in mystical thought, in the same way that Christ rescued us.

We must remember that it was the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3) and the proclamation of the gospel that brought us (Romans 10:13–17), as Christians, from the kingdom of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). More than just showing those blinded by mystical ideas where their own thinking is flawed (2 Corinthians 10:4–5), we must point them to the only man who has ever perfectly understood all of life's mysteries — Jesus Christ.

So when Christians pass by those enslaved to mysticism, we should view them as a person who has no clothes lying along the road and has been robbed of everything and left for dead. They are in need of salvation through Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and Resurrection. The unbelievers need to repent (Acts 17:30) and receive Christ (John 1:12). This is why the Christian stops to help, applying the salve of the gospel to their wounds and calling on the Great Physician to bring them spiritual healing.