

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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*The New Spirituality
And False Religions
Of The 21st Century*

Can You Defend Your Faith?



Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as "15 minutes of fame". Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, "The Al Denson Show." "You've got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport," says Al. "This has all been so amazing. I can't imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don't have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, 'I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.' You can't ask for anything more or better than that."

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The New Spirituality & False Religions Of The 21st Century *Can You Defend Your Faith?*

"Now the Spirit speaks expressively, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrine of demons." I Timothy 4:1

Spirituality seems to be on people's minds today like never before. The New York Times Magazine documented the beginning of this renewed interest several years ago when it wrote a story in December of 1997 that declared, "Religion makes a comeback. America has outgrown its take it or leave it attitude toward religion. Even people without faith are looking for God." Spirituality has now become the latest corporate buzzword and is finding a home in management seminars. Books on spiritual experiences are the rage in the world of publishing. Newspapers, magazines, and television are reflecting America's fascination for anything of a spiritual nature. People seem to be genuinely searching for help and healing for their bodies, minds, and spirits.

However, the evidence of a real "spiritual awakening" or religious revival seems contradictory because there lies such a "Grand Canyon" between what Americans say they believe and how they behave. Church attendance in some mainline denominations continues to decline. Half of those who claim to be Christians have no idea who delivered the Sermon On The Mount, why we celebrate

Easter, or what the Ten Commandments say.

Six out of every ten new marriages in America will end in divorce. Homes are disintegrating and many children in this country are growing up in homes with absentee parents. Forty percent of

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American children go to bed each night without a biological father in the house. Child and sexual abuse, alcohol, drugs, crime, violence and an overall decline in moral values continue to be major problems in this country. Our "talk" and our "walk" show that our choices are at odds with our values.

Even though all these moral problems seem on the surface to contradict this new interest in spirituality, in reality they

help explain this new hunger for the spiritual. The intellectual and technological progress we have experienced in this country, as well as our affluence, has left most Americans asking, "Is that all there is?" All the things we thought would give purpose and meaning to our lives have instead driven us to look within and up for answers to life. Secularism has not been able to satisfy the needs and longings in our souls, but rather has only made us more aware of how deep those needs and longings are. George Gallup says, "When problems run out of control, solutions appear insurmountable in our own strength. When addictions leave people feeling helpless, they turn to a Higher Power.

When data threatens to overwhelm with information, we become desperate for wisdom to help us make our way through the overload.”

Many people who would have once turned to the church or religious traditions for help, feel those things have failed them and now do not know where to turn. Families are routinely uprooted to follow job transfers and people are left feeling isolated and stranded. We are feeling more hurried and harried by stress, while our possessions seem to own us and our schedules control us. Americans say their interest in spirituality is growing, yet at the same time they believe the impact of religion is diminishing. All of this is leaving people confused and anxious in their seeking, but a spiritual restlessness continues to drive them.

At the turn of the twentieth century, the majority of Americans practiced their faith in a

traditional Judeo-Christian setting. Now at the beginning of the twenty-first century, people are more likely to depend on an assortment of religious influences, that range from the good, to the grotesque. Eastern and Western, pagan and traditional, occult and Christian beliefs are getting intertwined, while as Gallup points out, people speak of Hindu reincarnation in the same breath with channeling the spirits of the dead and Christian ethical principles. This kind of spiritual mixing and experimentation is extremely dangerous and must be sorted out.

It is a serious mistake to think that everyone in America means the same thing when using the words spiritual or spirituality. Spirituality is a term that seems to grow more confusing by the day and it is one which we must define. When Gallup asked Americans to do so, almost one-third of those surveyed defined spirituality with

no reference to God or a higher authority. For many Americans, God is optional in their search for spiritual fulfillment. Even those who say they believe in God may not be talking about the God of the Bible. The god they refer to may be one of any number of false gods depending on whether they are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, New Age, Wiccan, etc.

We are a culture that has a tendency to focus on our own needs and wants, so this breeds a spirituality that exalts self and minimizes God. In another Gallup survey the question was asked, “Do you rely more on yourself to solve the problems of life, or on an outside power, such as God?” 53 percent said they rely on self. More and more, our theme song in America seems to be, “I Did It My Way.”

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Spirituality in our country has also become synonymous with the word “experience.”

Gallup defines this as a “self-gratifying rush of soul adrenaline.” We are living in a day when people are no longer buying cars or clothes—what they are buying is an experience.

Restaurants, coffee bars, theme parks—they are all trying to cash in on our craving for experiences. It seems that hunger for meaning in life has been replaced by our insatiable appetite for experience and “Kodak moments.” As a result, most people come to church expecting an experience, as well.

This is not to say that genuine spiritual experiences are not important. But if spirituality ends with experience or if experience is elevated over belief, then people are left still longing for truth and for God. True spirituality is more than our emotions and our wants. If we are equating spirituality with feelings, then as Eugene Peterson says, we will “be at the mercy of glands, weather, and digestion.” Spirituality must be grounded in a solid belief system based on the truth of

God’s Word, and not simply in emotional experiences. E. M. Forster said, “Ecstasy doesn’t last. People are waiting to be pointed to something that does last.” That thing is a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Along with our culture’s quest for experience is the assumption that it is impossible to know absolute truth. Therefore, we are living in a day when there is major resistance to declaring any one set of religious teachings to be true. The thought that we are all headed in the same direction just on different paths, along with the growing number of religious options in our country has fueled this idea. “One way is as meaningful as the next, as long as you are sincere” is heard everywhere today.

Only about one third of all Americans say they “completely agree” that there are clear guidelines about what is good or evil that apply to everyone regardless of the situation. Relativism seems to be the rule of the day. This new

“create your own religion” has given us a “cafeteria” approach to spirituality where people are mixing and matching pagan, Hebrew, Buddhism, Jesus, Islam, New Age, and anything else they choose.

The great majority of Americans do not know what they believe, or why. Many do not know what it means to belong to the faith or denomination to which they subscribe. Most would be hard-pressed to defend their faith. In Gallup surveys, born-again Americans are just as likely as those who don’t claim to be Christians

to believe in astrology, consult astrology charts, and to have consulted a fortune teller. They even differ little from those who believe in reincarnation, witches, ghosts, and channeling.

The problem is not so much that people do not believe anything, it is that they believe everything. “There seems to be a determination by most people in our society to believe as many different things as they possibly can, all at the same time, and even if some of those things flatly contradict each another,” says Joel Belz of World magazine.

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Americans face the constant temptation to...

David Henderson says that our society breeds consumers, spectators, and self-absorbed individuals. As a result, we live in, as one author puts it, “quickaholic” times. When this attitude of “have to have it now” moves into the arena of the spiritual, then if people don’t get what they are looking for quickly, they may jump from one thing to another. George Gallup says, “Americans face the constant temptation to pass over the wisdom of the ancients in favor of the guru of the month. In today’s postmodern world, ‘spirituality’ may as easily refer to the cult of the goddess, or to the channeling of occult spirits, as to the practice of historic Judeo-Christian piety.”

Gallup says that in 1947, only six percent of Americans identified themselves as anything other than Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. In the late eighties it was nineteen percent among those age eighteen to twenty-four. In recent surveys, twenty-three percent of Americans say they believe in astrology, and twenty-five percent

believe in the Eastern religious concept of reincarnation. This is despite the fact that a large percentage also identify themselves as Christians. In 1998, forty-seven percent of Americans described themselves as born-again or evangelical Christians. When a tighter definition was used, (have had a born-again experience, believe the Bible is the literal Word of God, and have tried to encourage someone to accept Jesus Christ as his or her Savior), that number dropped to twenty percent.

In the book, *When Cultists Ask*, Drs. Norm Geisler and Ron Rhodes write this: “Cults and new religions are exploding in unprecedented proportions on the American horizon. As the light of Christianity fades, darkness is flooding in from every side. Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and New Age religions galore are all seeking the souls of human beings. Each professes to have the latest way to enlightenment, the prophet for our time, or the sure way to universal peace.

Some experts say there are about 700 cults, while others say there are as many as 3,000. Cults of one form or the another involve more than 20 million people in the United States, and they are multiplying at an alarming rate. Worldwide there are now over five million Jehovah’s Witnesses (who spend over one billion man-hours per year proselytizing), almost nine million Mormons (presently growing at a rate of 1,500 new members per day), and tens of millions of New Ager.

World religions that are diametrically opposed to Christianity are also growing at a frightening rate. For example, there are nearly one billion Muslims in the world. That is about one out of every five persons on earth! In North America alone it is estimated that there are between four and eight million Muslims. And there are more than 1,100 Muslim mosques in the United States.”



...pass over the wisdom of the ancients in favor of the guru of the month.

All of these cults and false religions counterfeit authentic Christianity. The only way that a lie can be recognized and corrected is when it is measured against the truth. In this case, the truth of the Word of God must be our sole authority and the measuring stick by which all other teachings are judged. A cult or false religion will always distort or deny the Word of God in one way or another. Here are the ways that most will do this:

- Most do not teach that the Bible is the sole authority for truth. They will teach that there are other writings which have more authority, such as Mormons' Book of Mormon, Mary Baker Eddy's book Science and Health, Reverend Moon's book The Divine Principle, or New Agers' The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ.
- Many will present a distorted view of God by denying that the God of the Bible is the one, true God who is three persons in one: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Trinity.
- They will also distort the truth about Jesus by denying one or more of the following:

1. Jesus is the one and only virgin-born Son of God who came to earth as a baby.
 2. Jesus lived a sinless life and died an atoning death on a Roman cross as payment for the sins of the world.
 3. Jesus was buried and bodily resurrected on the third day as He said He would be.
 4. Jesus was seen by more than 500 people over a period of forty days.
 5. Jesus ascended into Heaven as His disciples watched and that He now sits at the right hand of God in Heaven making intercession for His children.
- Cults and false religions usually deny that salvation is by grace and grace alone.

Drs. Rhodes and Geisler warn us that one of the most common things that cults do is to give Christian terms new meanings and deceive untrained Christians into believing the cult is Christian. For example, New Age cults sometimes use the Christian terms "resurrection" and

"ascension" when they really mean the "rise" of Christ-consciousness in the world. The familiar term "born-again" is often used by New Agers to support the doctrine of reincarnation. The term "the Christ" is used by New Agers to seek Christian approval when to them it actually means an occult office held by various gurus throughout history.

Cults and false religions are flourishing for many reasons:

- Christians have not been grounded in the doctrinal truths of the Word of God, so

many are easy prey for false teaching. Most Christians would find it difficult, if not impossible, to defend what they believe, and why.

- Christians, for the most part have failed to have an "observable difference," in their lives, as Dr. Henry Blackaby puts it. When those who claim the name of Christ refuse to allow Him to make a moral difference in the way they live, the unbelieving world sees nothing in Christianity that they need.

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- The organized church has failed to meet people's deepest needs and to provide them with a sense of belonging. As someone has said, many churches have instead, majored on the ABC's: Attendance, Buildings, and Cash.
- The growth of relativism in our culture is a large contributor to the growth of cults. When Secular Humanism convinced Americans to deny God-given absolutes and say "Everything is relative so do your own thing," the path was paved for false teachings of every kind.
- When American society largely rejected its Judeo-Christian (God created all) roots for Secular Humanism (there is no God at all), which didn't satisfy the deepest longings in people's hearts, the only thing left was Eastern mysticism (God is all and all is God). Now instead of looking upward or outward, people are looking inward for the god inside.
- The emphasis in America on comfort, pleasure, experience, and feelings have led to seeking out religions that feel good.

- The Bible is very clear that unregenerated man is in rebellion against God. One of the ways this rebellion manifests itself is against the moral law of God. People are choosing to embrace religions that won't confront them and where they can feel comfortable when their lifestyles contradict the moral teachings of God's Word.
- Walter Martin has said, "This is a generation without a sense of history—cut off from the past, alienated from the present, and having a fragmented concept of the future. The 'now' generation is in reality a lost generation." The breakdown of the family in America has left many of our young looking for a sense of belonging and security. Cults are all too willing to meet that need.
We must make no mistake about it—cults and false religions are always built on lies and half-truths. They will always deceive and mislead people, and they always begin with one source—the one the Bible calls "the father of

lies." Believing these lies is a very serious and dangerous thing because there are eternal consequences to pay. Too many adults in this country are uniformed in matters of faith, views of God, and the truth of God's Word. When this is coupled with the fact that our culture denies the value of careful study of matters of belief, it is easy to see the weakness and the danger in the current spirituality. The emphasis is on experience and not on understanding truths. Eugene Peterson has said, "Contemporary spirituality desperately needs focus, precision, and roots: focus on Christ, precision in the Scriptures, and roots in

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In the midst of all of this confusion and deception, the only answer is the truth of the Word of God.

I Chronicles 12:32 says that when the tribe of Issachar went to battle along with King David, they "... understood the times and knew what Israel should do." Christians are engaged in a battle today that is just as real as that one long ago, and it is equally as important that we understand the times in which we live and know what to do. The battle we are fighting is for the truth. It is impossible to recognize a lie unless you first know and understand the truth.

There is nothing like the Bible in all the literature of the world, religious or irreligious. It is completely reliable and trustworthy. Dr. Skip Smith gives us a wonderful overview of this amazing book: "There were about thirty-six God-inspired men who penned the Bible, and they wrote over a period of about 1500 years, beginning with Moses and ending with the Apostle John. The Old Testament was written by about 28 men from 1500 B.C. to about 400 B.C. The New Testament was written by about eight men from about 35 A.D. to about 96 A.D. All these writers were separated by 1500 years. Among them were kings, prime ministers, lawmakers, shepherds, prophets, soldiers, priests, judges, apostles, evangelists, fishermen, a farmer, a tax collector, a physician, a tent maker and a governor. The writing was done in Rome, Greece, Asia Minor, Palestine and Babylon.

The fact that these men, living through a period of approximately 1500 years when

writing was unknown, could write a single book of sixty-six disconnected parts that when collected and put together should make a complete whole which does not contradict, but compliment each other without divergence, discrepancy, or error; giving the origin, history, and prophetic destiny of man reveal the harmony of the Bible. The first writer never met the last writer. This is one of the most remarkable evidences yet produced as proof of the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures."

It is one thing to argue that the Bible is a reliable source of history, but it is another thing to say that the Bible is the Word of God and is inspired, inerrant, and infallible. How have Christians come to this conclusion? The issue of infallibility goes far beyond general trustworthiness. The final conclusion is built on a series of premises. R. C. Sproul helps us with our reasoning regarding these premises:

- A. The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document.
 - B. On the basis of this reliable document we have sufficient evidence to believe confidently that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
 - C. Jesus Christ being the Son of God is an infallible authority.
 - D. Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is more than generally trustworthy; it is the very Word of God.
 - E. The word, in that it comes from God, is utterly trustworthy because God is utterly trustworthy.
- Conclusion:** On the basis of the infallible authority of Jesus Christ, the church believes the Bible to be utterly trustworthy, i.e., infallible.

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Rational human beings know (instinctively)...

Jesus Christ was brought before Pontius Pilate and was put on trial in his court. In an attempt to understand why people hated Jesus so much that they wanted to see him crucified, Pilate asked Jesus what He was doing and if He was trying to become king. Jesus gave Pilate this answer in John 18:37b: "For this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me." Pilate was asking Jesus to summarize the intent of His entire mission. Jesus told Pilate that He had come to answer the question of truth and that He was the source of truth.

If we are convinced that Jesus Christ is the sinless Son of God then we must take seriously His view of holy scripture. We cannot submit to the authority of Christ without accepting His view of Scripture as authoritative. Therefore, our faith in the infallibility of scripture is based on Christ's view of scripture.

Romans 1:21 and 25 says, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened...They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised."

Paul says in these verses that because people prefer to live in denial, they are making a choice not to know the truth. They refuse to acknowledge God because they do not want to acknowledge their dependence on God or His claim on their lives. Their sin is in the refusal to acknowledge what they know to be true, thereby robbing God of who He is. People who do not accept the Bible as the Word of God have a much greater problem: They have suppressed the truth from their thought life

because they know if they acknowledge that the Word of God is true, they will also have to acknowledge their accountability to the God of the Word.

Dr. H. M. Morris said: "Therefore, men who reject or ignore God do so, not because science or reason requires them to, but purely and simply because they want to!" Dr. James Kennedy has said, "The whole tenor of human life is affected by whether men regard themselves as the supreme being in the universe, or acknowledge a superhuman being whom they conceive of as an object of fear or love and a force to be defied or a Lord to be obeyed." People do not believe

the scripture or do not believe in God not because they can't, but because they won't. They are simply unwilling to surrender their lives to the Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ.

R. C. Sproul says, "The most convinced atheist is not intellectually unaware of the reality of God. The unbeliever has another problem: He or she does not like the God who is. God's existence cannot be deduced through theoretical thought, empirical thought, or rational deduction. Paul says we need not prove God. Rational human beings know (instinctively) that God exist—and know it clearly. They just don't want to hear Him."

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Zedekiah was king of the nation of Judah. He was a hardened unbeliever, who had never before cared about truth or about what God had to say about anything. But Zedekiah found himself in a terrifying and desperate situation one day. He had the most feared army on the face of the earth breathing down his neck, so he asked the prophet Jeremiah this question in Jeremiah 37: "Is there a word from the Lord?"

The answer then, and the answer today, is a resounding "yes." God has given us His Word. It is inspired, inerrant, infallible, reliable, and

trustworthy. In light of this, the question for us should not be—"Is there a word from the Lord?" The real question is: "Are we ready to receive His Word and submit ourselves to its life-changing authority and power?"

Theologian, Michael Novak says, "At the millennium, secular humanism (or as historian Paul Johnson says, "the arrogant belief that men and women could solve all the mysteries of the universe by their own unaided intellect") shows its limits...you may be sure that the twenty-first

century will be the most religious in five hundred years...something new is stirring everywhere." This newfound interest in spirituality may last through the third millennium, or we may only have a brief window of opportunity to point the spiritually hungry to faith in Jesus Christ.

We, who know Christ personally must be ready to clearly articulate the reason for the hope within us. (1 Peter 3:15). Today, as never before, Christians don't have to argue the case for spiritual realities. The job we have is to help

people believe the right thing. Before we can do this, we must be grounded in the truth, ourselves. Time is short. Whether or not the twenty-first century becomes an age of hope for mankind will depend on the people of God standing strong and unwavering on the truth of God.

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