

THE CONCISE GUIDE TO

# **Today's Religions AND Spirituality**

**James K. Walker**

with the staff of Watchman Fellowship



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## THE CONCISE GUIDE TO TODAY'S RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITY

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# Introduction

The purpose of this book is to provide readers with a handy guide to the diverse landscape of American spirituality. This book contains over 1,700 concise definitions and cross references covering religions, denominations, cults, occult groups, new movements, historical heresies, key leaders, controversial doctrines, practices, and key vocabulary terms.

This book is needed because the face of religion in America is changing. While Christianity and Judaism still rank first and second in numbers of adherents, there are a growing number of other world religions, alternative forms of spirituality, and new religious movements gaining converts. Between 1990 and 2004, Islam and Buddhism grew by an estimated 109 percent and 170 percent respectively in the United States. During the same period, all the religions and denominations classified as “Christian,” as a whole, grew by only 5 percent.<sup>1</sup>

There is also widespread interest in the occult as reflected by popular TV programs such as NBC’s *Medium*. The drama is reportedly based on the true-life psychic Allison DuBois, who allegedly makes contact with the dead. In 2006, *John Edward Cross Country* was launched on the We network as a sequel to Edward’s earlier show, *Crossing Over*, and a best-selling book by the same title featured alleged psychic communication with the dead. CBS has also joined the party with the hit series *Ghost Whisperer*, which stars Jennifer Love Hewitt.

The country’s fascination with the occult and witchcraft goes far beyond television programming, reaching into the core beliefs of millions of Americans. A 2003 Harris poll revealed that almost one in three Americans

(31 percent) believe in astrology, an ancient occult divination practice going back to Bible times (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). More telling in the Harris survey is that among Americans ages 25-29, belief in astrology has jumped to an unprecedented 43 percent.<sup>2</sup>

The growing impact of the occult can also be measured by comparing its growth with that of other religions. Based on research conducted at the graduate school of the City University of New York by sociologists Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman, paganism (as represented by Wiccans, pagans, and Druids) now ranks as the seventh-largest organized religion in America, with an estimated 433,267 adherents as of 2004.<sup>3</sup>

Missionary efforts by nontraditional religions are also remarkable. In 2006, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society reported that 6.7 million Jehovah's Witnesses spent over 1.3 *billion* hours in their door-to-door proclamation.<sup>4</sup> In 2006, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) fielded over 56,000 missionaries in 165 countries.<sup>5</sup>

Their massive missionary efforts have paid dividends. Joseph Smith, Jr. founded the LDS church in 1830 with six charter members. They currently have 12.5 million members worldwide with about 5.7 million<sup>6</sup> in the United States, causing some scholars to rank the LDS as the eighth-largest "denomination" in America.<sup>7</sup> The same study positions the Jehovah's Witnesses as the eleventh-largest "denomination." The Watchtower reported that in 2005, 16.6 million people attended their annual Memorial Meal worldwide, with 2.2 million in attendance in the United States.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to large groups, such as the LDS, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Wicca, hundreds of new, much smaller religions are springing up—seemingly on a daily basis. They join an ever-widening stream of American spirituality that includes some groups that promote a host of questionable new doctrines and controversial spiritual practices. This book has been written to provide some basic understanding of much of this phenomena.

## **An Evangelical Christian Perspective**

In the spirit of full disclosure, it is acknowledged that this book is written from a Christian perspective. More specifically, it reflects an evangelical Christian viewpoint as described in the definitions section. While every effort has been made to be factual and accurate, this book is unavoidably flavored by conservative, traditional Christian beliefs about the Bible, sin, salvation, the gospel, and Jesus Christ. This perspective is reflected in the

definitions themselves and, in some cases, the decisions that were made as to what subjects and groups should be included.

We believe in religious freedom. Freedom of religion must be cherished and protected. This is my position and the position of Watchman Fellowship. While we believe that all religions should have equal protection, it does not mean that we believe all religions are equally valid from a biblical standpoint. We do not accept the axiom that “all roads lead to heaven.” Jesus said that most people take the wrong road, which He described as the “broad” way that takes them to “destruction” (Matthew 7:13). Jesus taught that there is only one road or path to God, saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

All religion is an attempt to address spiritual needs. The Bible says that the answer to the spiritual hunger experienced by all humankind is found in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. It is He who purchased our salvation through His death on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection. The salvation He offers, eternal life, is available only to those who receive it as a gift by grace (undeserved kindness) through faith (complete trust) in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Some General Definitions

The term *cult* is based on the Latin word *cultus*, which is found in English in agrarian terms such as *cultivation* and in the word *culture*. The root is also used in a religious context to refer simply to any system of belief and worship. In a Christian context, the word is used to denote an inauthentic alternative to the Christian faith. That usage can probably be traced to the early twentieth-century with Ernst Troeltsch’s *The Social Teaching of the Christian Church*, in which he defined a cult as a mystical religion that appeals to the intelligentsia.<sup>9</sup>

The term *cult* has also evolved in the work of psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, who frequently use the word to describe religious structure or belief patterns with meanings (usually nonpejorative) unique to their disciplines.

Another usage for the word *cult* is found in the secular cult-awareness movement—sometimes referred to by critics as the anti-cult movement. The International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA—formerly the American Family Foundation)<sup>10</sup> of Bonita Springs, Florida, is an interdisciplinary network of academicians, professionals, former group members, and families who study and educate the public about religious groups and cults.

Specifically, they provide information about social-psychological influence and control, authoritarianism, and zealotry found in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments. They use the word *cult* within the context of the following 10 traits:

1. *Submission to Leadership*—Leaders tend to exert absolute control, frequently portraying themselves as prophets of God (or even God Himself). Such individuals demand submission even if changes or conflicts occur in ideology or behavior.
2. *Polarized Worldview*—Cults usually view the outside world through a paradigm of existential conflict, in which the group must be isolated from the hostile and contaminated world outside.
3. *Emphasizing Emotion over Thought*—Emotions, intuitions, and mystical insights are typically given priority over rational conclusions.
4. *Emotional Manipulation*—Cult leaders frequently manipulate group and interpersonal dynamics to influence responses. (This type of manipulation may be very subtle and take the form of questions or suggestions that evoke emotional responses such as fear, guilt, or a false sense of obligation designed to trigger compliance with the leaders' desires.)
5. *Denigration of Critical Thinking*—Some cults characterize any independent thought as selfish and rational use of intellect as evil.
6. *Restrictive Soteriology*—Salvation, enlightenment, or fulfillment can only be realized in the group.
7. *Situational Ethics*—Any action or behavior is justifiable as long as it furthers the group's goals. The group (or leader) determines absolute truth, which then supersedes all outside juridical laws.
8. *Preeminence of the Group*—The group's concerns typically supersede an individual's goals, needs, aspirations, and concerns. Tremendous pressure is exerted upon individual members to conform to the norms of the group.

9. *Condemnation of Apostates and Critics*—Members are frequently allowed no contact with former members or critics of the group. This prohibition is often even levied against members who make critical comments of the group or its leader.
10. *Isolation from Nonmembers*—Contact with nonmembers, even family, is frequently restricted to proselytic encounters.

## Some Christian Definitions

**Cult:** In addition to the usages mentioned above, mainstream Christians often define a *cult* as a group who presents an inauthentic form of Christianity that seriously deviates from the essential doctrines of classical Christianity. In most cases, the group in question claims to be Christian or compatible with Christianity but the organization's aberrant beliefs concerning central doctrines of the faith result in the group being classified as unorthodox, or cultic. In this sense, the term *cult* primarily has a doctrinal or theological meaning<sup>11</sup> and could be used to describe pseudo-Christian groups or forms of counterfeit Christianity. Most often, Watchman Fellowship uses this theological meaning when using the word *cult*.

For over 20 years at Watchman Fellowship, we have used the following “mathematical formula” to identify four patterns often evident in the cults in terms of theological deviation:

1. **Addition**—Pseudo-Christian groups often add to Scripture, either by introducing additional works to the canon of Scripture (e.g., the Book of Mormon), receiving additional “revelations” from God (e.g., the apocalyptic revelations of David Koresh), or declaring that the Bible cannot be understood apart from the indispensable literature or teachings of their group (e.g., the reliance of Jehovah's Witnesses upon literature from the Watchtower Society). See *Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18*.
2. **Subtraction**—Pseudo-Christian groups subtract from the humanity of Christ (e.g., the gnostic HERESY) or the deity of Christ, either through an Arian denial of his deity (e.g., the Jehovah's Witnesses) or by claiming that all humans are either gods or united with God (e.g., New Age devotees who attempt to achieve a Christ-consciousness). See *2 Corinthians 11:3-4*.
3. **Multiplication**—Pseudo-Christian groups multiply the requirements for salvation, teaching that Christ's atoning work on the

cross and resurrection is not sufficient. Good works, law keeping, and earning favor are also required for one to receive eternal life—rather than salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone (e.g., the sabbatarian groups who require observance of the Jewish Sabbaths, dietary laws, tithing, etc., as preconditions for receiving eternal life). See *Galatians* 1:6-8; 2:16.

4. **Division**—Pseudo-Christian groups often divide their followers' loyalties by teaching that one cannot be loyal to God without being loyal to their leader, group, or organization. This characteristic, sometimes called the "only true church syndrome," leads followers to believe that there is no salvation outside of that organization or leader. This creates *another* "mediator between God and men" besides Jesus. This condition often results in the worst kind of spiritual abuse, as followers feel they must stay and endure whatever the group demands because there is no salvation elsewhere. See *1 Timothy* 2:5.

**Occult:** The term *occult* comes from the Latin *occultus*, referring to that which is hidden. In a general sense, the term *occult* can be applied to any attempt to gain supernatural knowledge or power apart from the God of the Bible. The word is generally used to describe secret or mysterious supernatural powers and magical rituals. Occultic groups typically exhibit the following distinctive characteristics:

1. Secret knowledge or wisdom can be attained using techniques that transcend the five human senses.
2. Such techniques usually involve contact with supernatural forces or energies.
3. The goal of obtaining such power is to exercise control over events, humans, or natural forces.

**New Age:** The New Age is a recent and developing belief system in North America encompassing thousands of autonomous (and sometimes contradictory) beliefs, organizations, and events. Adherents of the New Age often borrow their theology from pantheistic Eastern religions and their practices from nineteenth-century Western spiritualism and occultism. The term *New Age* is used herein as an umbrella term to describe organizations that seem to exhibit one or more of the following beliefs:

1. *Pantheism*—All is one, and all reality is thus part of the whole (monism) and the one is identified as God. Thus the universe (including humanity) is God, which is seen as an impersonal, all-encompassing force.
2. *Reincarnation*—Humans never die, but instead continually develop themselves through a succession of lives.
3. *Reality Manipulation*—Humans can alter or create their own reality or values through a transformed consciousness or altered states of consciousness.

In all cases, our use of words such as *cult*, *occult*, and *New Age* are merely intended to provide a very basic doctrinal taxonomy. The use of these categories and terms in no way implies that the followers or leaders of these organizations or religions are evil or immoral people. It simply means that such groups promote doctrines or practices that may be considered outside the boundaries of historic, biblical Christianity.

### Some Advice for Families

Much of the counseling we do at Watchman Fellowship involves advising Christian families who have had a son or daughter join a new religious movement or alternative faith. If your son is dating a Jehovah's Witness, or your daughter is dabbling in Wicca, or your granddaughter has become a Latter-day Saint, I know how overwhelming that can be. I can remember the strain placed on my relationship with my father when, as a fourth-generation Mormon, I decided to leave the LDS church to become an evangelical Christian. It was devastating. I also know how hard it can be for Christian families to see a loved one leave the faith. It is especially difficult for those families who have a deep and active commitment to traditional Christian faith.

You may have purchased this book in the hopes that it would be a starting place for understanding some of your loved one's beliefs or practices. If so, let me share a few suggestions you may find helpful. First, you may want to refer to our Web site ([www.watchman.org](http://www.watchman.org)). It contains a great deal of free information as well as witnessing resources you can order.

I would also encourage you to do everything possible to maintain the relationship with the family member who has joined an alternative faith. Punishment or ultimatums rarely, if ever, have the desired result. As long as you have an open door of communication, there is a chance for real discussion and resolution. Learn everything you can about the religion or

group so that when the Lord opens the door of communication, you will be fully prepared to discuss your concerns. This includes being prepared to address the issues biblically, factually (with the proper documentation), respectfully, and prayerfully. If the opportunity to do this doesn't arise right away, don't become discouraged. I have found that oftentimes, the Lord seems to wait until we are fully prepared before He opens the door for dialogue to take place.

Once you are prepared, you need to be sensitive to the Lord's timing on when and how that discussion should take place. Avoid *ad hominem* attacks against the individual (either the family member or members of the religion). Keep in mind that no one can (or should) be forced to believe anything against his or her will. Instead, you must spend time building a bridge and maintaining the relationship. The Bible says that we are not to quarrel, but "in humility" to "be gentle" in hopes that God will "grant them repentance" (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

Finally, do not forget the power of prayer. Our source of hope and strength in trying times is our trust in the Lord. From before the foundation of the world, He knew you would be facing this challenge. He is still God; He is still in control, He has a plan, and you want to walk willingly with Him wherever that plan may lead. If my staff or I can be of help to you, please let us know. For contact information, see page 361.

## A

**A-Albionic Consulting and Research, James Daugherty**—Ferndale, MI: Also known as the New Paradigms Project. The group's primary agenda involves disseminating a CONSPIRACY THEORY regarding a global power struggle between the British Empire and the Vatican. They also promote other conspiracy theories. Published *The Project* and *Conspiracy Digest* newsletters. Currently publish a *New Paradigms* e-mail list. Web site—<http://www.a-albionic.com>.

**Aaronic Order, Marice Glendenning**—Murry, UT: A Mormon splinter group incorporated in 1942 by Glendenning, who was excommunicated by the LDS Church after receiving and publishing revelations later known as the *Levitical Writings*. See CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

**Abaddon:** (Greek, *Appollyon* = “the destroyer”) A demon described in the BIBLE as “the angel of the bottomless pit” (Revelation 9:11). JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES have alternately taught that Abaddon is Jesus Christ and SATAN. See WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY.

**Abaku:** Syncretistic religion of the Caribbean and South America. Blends tribal religions of Africa with ROMAN CATHOLICISM. Akabu is particularly influential in the religions of Brazil.

**Abbey of Thelema**—Old Greenwich, CT: An OCCULT organization practicing ESOTERIC MAGIC, and continuing the teachings of ALEISTER CROWLEY. Web site—<http://thelemicmagick.com>.

**The Abode of the Message:** See AEGIS AT THE ABODE OF THE MESSAGE.

**Abundant Life United Pentecostal Church**—Portland, OR: Part of the United Pentecostal Church, a denomination in the family of APOSTOLIC CHURCHES. Abundant Life UPC, like most Apostolic churches, stresses holiness prohibitions against makeup, jewelry, cutting hair, and television. Publishes *The Apostolic Contender* newsletter. See ONENESS PENTECOSTALISM.

**Academy for Guided Imagery, Martin L. Rossman and David E. Brelsler**—Mill Valley, CA: Practices physical and psychological healing through ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS, GUIDED IMAGERY, HYPNOSIS, and MAGIC. Web site—<http://www.academyforguidedimagery.com>.

**Academy of Healing Arts, Inc.**—Krum, TX: Practices AROMATHERAPY and REFLEXOLOGY. Web site—<http://www.academyofhealingarts.info>.

**Academy of Religion and Psychical Research**—Evanston, IL: Organization founded in 1972 as an academic affiliate of SPIRITUAL FRONTIERS FELLOWSHIP to explore PSYCHIC occurrences and metaphysical experiences while evaluating the growing interest in OCCULT phenomena in Christian churches. In 2005 the name was changed to ACADEMY OF SPIRITUALITY AND PARANORMAL STUDIES, Inc. Web site—<http://www.lightlink.com/arpr>. See SPIRITUALISM; DIVINATION.

**Academy of Spirituality and Paranormal Studies**—Bloomfield CT: See ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

**Acappella:** A contemporary CHRISTIAN music group formed by Keith Lancaster in 1982. Named for their purely *a cappella* (voices only) music, this is by far the most popular group to emerge from the CHURCHES OF CHRIST, which forbids musical instruments in worship. Web site—<http://www.acappella.org>. See CHURCHES OF CHRIST.

**Achievers' Group Corporation**—Orlando, FL: Teaches that humans can live to 150 and more by ingesting Achiever's Choice, capsules containing a 200-1 formula of aloe vera and psycnogenol. See HOLISTIC HEALING.

**Acoustic Brain Research, Tom Kenyon:** Kenyon teaches that humans can attain higher levels of existence through achieving an ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS and learning to vibrate inner sound at a higher rate through their CHAKRAS.

**Activated:** A monthly subscription-based magazine with links to THE FAMILY (CHILDREN OF GOD). See ACTIVATED MINISTRIES.

**Activated Ministries**—Escondido, CA: A charitable foundation and licensed distributor of AURORA PRODUCTION AG products worldwide, including the magazine *ACTIVATED*. Web site—<http://www.activatedministries.org>. See THE FAMILY (CHILDREN OF GOD).

**Actualism:** NEW AGE, PANENTHEISTIC teaching that humanity is divine and united with the Mother-Father-Creator God. See CHRIST CONSCIOUSNESS.

**Acupressure:** See ACUPUNCTURE.

**Acupuncture:** Chinese system of healing that uses needles or hand pressure (acupressure) to balance the YIN AND YANG energies in the body by opening blocked MERIDIANS (apexes in the pathways). Once the CHAKRAS (key points or intersections) are open, the energy (CHI) can then flow through the body, bringing all things into harmony. While some limited physical effects (mostly anesthetic) can be attributed to this practice, these effects have scientific, physiological explanations totally unrelated to the theories of TAOISM. See HOLISTIC HEALTH. For further research, a four-page Watchman Fellowship Profile is available (see page 363). Web site—<http://www.watchman.org/notebook>.

**Acuto Center for Renewal and Prayer**—Wichita, KS: Named after the town where Maria de Mattias, founder of the Sisters of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, began her work in 1834. Combines ROMAN CATHOLICISM with Eastern MYSTICISM and NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY.

**Adams, Dennis**—Mount Shasta, CA: A NEW AGE teacher who proclaims that humanity is God. Web site—<http://www.dennisadamsseminars.com>.

**Adelphi Organization, Richard Kieninger** (1927–2002)—Dallas, TX: Promotes NEW AGE teachings on ATLANTIS, KARMA, and the seven planes of existence. The group believes a secret organization of saints called The Brotherhoods is using the United States as a launching pad for establishing a paradisiacal world. Kieninger established a utopian community called Adelphi. Web site—<http://www.adelphi.com>. See STELLE GROUP.

**Adeptco, Chuck McDonald**—Omaha, NE: McDonald practices YOGA, working with CRYSTALS, REINCARNATION, KARMA, and the teachings of the KABBALAH.

**Adi Da, aka Bubba Free John, aka Da Free John:** Born Franklin Jones, teaches a variation of *Advaita Vedanta*, or radical MONISM. Adi Da claims to be the one God, BRAHMA, and ATMAN. Former members accuse Adi Da of sexually abusing his female members. Web site—<http://www.adidam.org>. See SPIRITUAL ABUSE.

**Adler, Margo:** A witch affiliated with the Covenant of the Goddess, the second-largest coven in the United States. Adler wrote the highly influential book *Drawing Down the Moon*. Adler is also a correspondent for National Public Radio and serves as the host of NPR's *Justice Talking*. See GODDESS; WICCA.

**Adoptionism:** See DYNAMIC MONARCHIANISM.

**Advanced Neuro Dynamics, Tad James**—Honolulu, HI: Practices NEUROLINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP) to help humans contact their higher self. James also teaches huna, the native Hawaiian religion and created Time Line Therapy, a process that allegedly enables a person to work through past negative experiences and produce positive behavioral change in minutes, making it faster than Brief Therapy. Web site—<http://www.tadjames.com>.

**Advanced Organization of Los Angeles (AOLA):** Promotes the philosophy of the CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY.

**Advanced Systems, Inc.:** See ZEN MASTER RAMA.

**Advanced Training Institute International (ATII):** See GOTHARD, BILL.

**Advent Christian Church**—Charlotte, NC: Teaches that the HOLY SPIRIT emanates from God, and that humans do not have souls. Not affiliated with the SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH or the CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST).

**Adventism/Adventist:** See SECOND ADVENT MOVEMENT.

**Adventures in Enlightenment:** Founded in 1986. See COLE-WHITTAKER, TERRY.

***Advice Line:*** See FOUNDATION FOR HUMAN UNDERSTANDING.

**AEgis at the Abode of the Message, Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan**—New Lebanon, NY: Now known as THE ABODE OF THE MESSAGE. A syncretistic NEW AGE group that combines SUFISM, ALCHEMY, DOWSING, and MEDITATION to lead to “inner attunement.” AEgis also uses the sweat lodge that is integral to much of NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY. Web site—<http://www.theabode.net>.

**Aesthetic Realism Foundation, Eli Seigel (1902–1978)**—New York: The Aesthetic Realism Foundation advances Seigel’s teaching that happiness can be achieved through the harmony of opposites—e.g., realizing and accepting that the world is both beautiful and horrific. Educators have criticized the foundation after public school teachers in New York introduced the philosophy into high school English, biology, and art courses. Web site—<http://www.aestheticrealism.org>.

**Aetherius Society, Dr. George King (1919–1997):** NEW AGE group that contacts the GREAT WHITE BROTHERHOOD and ASCENDED MASTERS, as well as UFOs, while practicing CLAIRVOYANCE, ALCHEMY, the OCCULT SECRETS of JESUS, and MANTRAS to align KARMA and escape REINCARNATION. Web site—<http://www.aetherius.org>.

**Affective Education:** Also called value-free, or non-directive, education. Influenced by the philosophy of Carl Rogers, affective education programs attempt to facilitate the emotional development of children in order to

enhance the learning process, particularly focusing on self-esteem. This contrasts with traditional educational paradigms that focus on cognitive, or intellectual, practices such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Affective education has become particularly influential in drug awareness programs for youth.

**African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem, Ben Ammi Ben Israel (Ben Carter)**—Dimona, Israel: Carter claims that while in Chicago in 1966, the angel Gabriel came to him in a vision and told him the Israelites among African Americans were to return to the Promised Land and establish the kingdom of God. The next year some 30–40 (the number varies, with the group listing it as 350) African Americans from Chicago left with him, traveling first to West Africa. In 1969 they entered Israel as immigrants. Their immigrant status was revoked in 1971; however, they remained steadfast, with upwards of 2,500 members living in the desert until they were granted permanent resident status in 2003. They adhere to many of the Old Testament laws, holy days, and practices, and they keep a vegetarian diet and are polygamous. Web site—<http://www.kingdomofyah.com>. See BLACK HEBREWS.

**African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME)**—Nashville, TN: A denomination of PROTESTANTISM with roots in METHODISM. The church grew out of the Free African Society that was formed in 1787 as a reaction to slavery and racism. In the 1990s, the church reported 7,000 congregations worldwide with over 2 million members. Web site—<http://www.ame-church.com>. See METHODISM.

**African Orthodox Church:** The spiritual arm of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. The church claims to be a member of the Eastern Catholic Church. A bishop in the church ordained Franz Wayne King, founder of the ST. JOHN COLTRANE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. See RASTAFARIANISM; ROMAN CATHOLICISM.

**Agasha Temple of Wisdom, Inc., William Eisen**—Los Angeles, CA: Proclaims the universal consciousness of God as taught by the ASCENDED MASTERS. Knowledge of such ESOTERIC practices as PYRAMIDOLOGY is gained through REINCARNATION.

**Agastiyar, Sage Agastiyar:** An Indian astrologist who lived in the eleventh-century B.C., Sage Agastiyar and his disciples allegedly wrote down the future of every person who will ever live. Current disciples of Agastiyar utilize ASTROLOGY to determine the sins committed in previous lives, as well as sins that will be committed in the future, prescribing the penance that must be performed in order to escape the cycle of REINCARNATION.

**Aggressive Christianity Mission Training Corps, Major Generals James and Deborah Green**—Berino, NM: An anti-ecclesiastical organization that claims that anyone who supports a centralized government or denomination is affiliated with the Antichrist. Salvation can only be found outside church and governmental systems.

**Agni Yoga Society, Nicholas and Helena Roerich**—New York, NY: The Roerichs started the society in 1920 to promote Agni YOGA, a NEW AGE ideology in which the Hierarchy of Light—similar to the ASCENDED MASTERS—provides guidance to humanity in being transformed by the “fiery energy” of consciousness and directed thought. Web site—<http://www.agniyoga.org>.

**Agnosticism:** From the Greek *a* (“no”) and *gnosis* (“to know”)—the belief that the truth of religious claims concerning the existence of God is inherently unknowable. Some agnostics believe that the knowledge of God’s existence is theoretically possible but not part of their personal experience. Thus, they would allow for the possibility of God’s existence. Other agnostics see the concept of God as unknowable and incoherent, leading to functional ATHEISM.

**Agon Buddhism:** Sect of BUDDHISM. Uses the *Agon Sutras* as scriptures.

**Agyeman, Jaramogi Abebe:** See PAN AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

**Ahabah Asah Prophetic Ministries:** See GATEKEEPERS.

**Ahmadiyya Movement:** An ISLAMic organization that claims that the SECOND COMING of Christ was fulfilled by the birth of the founder, Ahmad, in Qadian, India. Web site—<http://www.ahmadiyya.org>.

**AION:** NEW AGE group that practices GODDESS worship, MAGIC, and the reading of RUNES.

**Air Land Emergency Response Teams (ALERT):** See GOTHARD, BILL.

**Akashic Records:** THEOSOPHICAL term designating an alleged library that exists on the astral plane containing all the thoughts, actions, and events of mankind. Mystics, through ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, tune in to this library for information.

**Alamo Christian Foundation, Tony Alamo**—Alma, AR: Tony Alamo, leader of this group, has been imprisoned for alleged illegal activities. The foundation teaches that traditional CHRISTIANITY is dead. Former followers have reported deplorable living conditions, MIND CONTROL, and slave labor. Operates Music Square Church in Tennessee and Holiness Tabernacle in Dyer, Arkansas. End Times Book is the publishing arm for the organization. Web site—<http://www.alamoministries.com>.

**Alan Shawn Feinstein Associates**—Cranston, RI: UFO contactee. The Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation is currently dedicated to humanitarian causes. In the 1980s, however, the group's efforts revolved around attempts to establish PSYCHIC contact with extraterrestrials. Web site—<http://www.feinsteinfoundation.com>.

**Alchemy:** In its original, literal meaning, theories and experiments involving the transmutation (dissolving and combining) of base metals to form gold though chemical and/or OCCULT and supernatural processes. Today the term carries the meaning of a mystical transformation in NEW AGE consciousness through various mystical techniques.

**Alchemy Institute, David Quigley**—Santa Rosa, CA: Founded in 1984. Provides training in hypnotherapy using alchemical hypnotherapy developed by Quigley. Uses inner guides, ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS, ALCHEMY, Gestalt, and SHAMANISM to heal a person's higher self. Also uses the names Alchemy Institute of Hypnosis and Alchemy Institute of Healing Arts. Web site—<http://www.alchemyinstitute.com>.

**Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.):** Founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson, the 12-step therapy program for people suffering from alcoholism has inspired numerous other programs. Steps two and three involve believing that there is a Power greater than the person, and then turning one's life over to that Power. Some Christians criticize A.A. for being pluralistic by encouraging personal devotion to non-Christian deities and religions. Web site—<http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org>.

**Aleph:** See AUM SHINRIKYO.

**Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi—**Philadelphia, PA: Combines Chassidic JUDAISM, NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY, Eastern MYSTICISM, *A COURSE IN MIRACLES*, and NEW AGE practices. Emphasizes combining syncretistic spirituality and psychology. Web site—<http://www.aleph.org>.

**Aletheia Psycho-Physical Foundation, Jack Schwarz—**Ashland, OR: Schwarz conducts NEW AGE seminars on the inner self, paraconsciousness, MEDITATION, and VISUALIZATION. Web site—<http://www.holisticu.org>.

**Alexander, Greta:** Alexander was a psychic who, through her use of NEW AGE practices such as CLAIRVOYANCE and ASTRAL PROJECTION, claimed to have solved hundreds of police cases. Alexander died from cancer in 1998.

**Allah:** The MONOTHEISTIC deity of ISLAM.

**Allegro, John:** Author and founder of THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS.

**All Hallow's Eve:** See HALLOWEEN.

**All Life Forms, James David Harman—**Lykens, PA: Harman denies the deity of JESUS CHRIST, claiming that causing any harm or discomfort to another living being earns damnation. His theology seems to have developed following the death of his son.