

INTRODUCTION TO LESS CONVENTIONAL TEACHINGS

Volume Three deals with Bible subjects relevant to teachings that are less conventional than the traditionally held teachings and are significantly held variously by the following denominations:

1. The World-Wide Church of God — Armstrongism (now splintered).
2. The Seventh Day Adventists.
3. The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (Mormonism).
4. Pentecostalism (notably Oneness Pentecostalism).
5. Christadelphianism

There are also splinter groups, such as The United Church of God and The Nazarene Fellowship, and other less well known denominations such as The Churches of Christ, The Way International (now splintered, one new group being Christian Education Services). All of these hold to some of the teachings covered in these studies.

- **The World-Wide Church of God** was started by Herbert Armstrong in 1934 and promoted a ‘Binatarian’ view of God (Jesus as being co-equal with “the Father”), so that the holy spirit is not viewed as a person. After Armstrong died his successors re-examined Armstrong’s teachings and changed many of them to a more orthodox belief system – sadly, in our opinion, to include the Trinity and to move to a weak position regarding the Kingdom. However, they did correctly dispense with the requirement to keep all the feasts of Israel. This re-examination of doctrine caused a number of splits one of which was:
 - **The United Church of God** which largely holds to Armstrong’s teachings of a ‘Binatarian’ view of God, and the requirement to keep all the feasts of Israel.
 - **The Seventh Day Adventists** originated with Ellen G. White and her husband in 1863. Although using only the KJV Bible, they rely heavily on the writings of their founder just as do many other denominations. In the 1930s this denomination became Trinitarian but still maintains its Sabbath-keeping requirement.
 - **The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints**, originated a few days after Joseph Smith’s Book of Mormon went on sale in the bookstore in Palmyra on March 25, 1830. So Mormonism, of course, works largely from the book of Mormon and several other books in addition to the Bible. It appears that whenever there is an issue the follower of Mormonism will give precedence to Mormon books rather than the Bible.
 - **Oneness Pentecostalism** originated with Frank Ewart and R.E. McAlister over the period of 1913-18. It holds to a Modalist belief in God, such that there is only a one person God who appears on earth as “the Son” i.e. Jesus.
 - **Churches of Christ** originated when the group led by the Unitarian believer, Alexander Campbell and the group led by the Arian believer Barton Stone amalgamated in around 1832. In time this denomination became Trinitarian.
 - **The Way International** (TWI) was founded by Victor Paul Wierwille in 1955 and had a peak membership of 35,000. This denomination held to the Unitarian view of God, Jesus and the holy spirit, but generally viewed Wierwille as “the man of God.” Shortly after he died in 1985, TWI splintered into several factions. In time, about 25,000 left but with some forming small home fellowship groups, while others formed their own organizations, largely based on TWI teachings and networks. One of these groups is the less autocratic:

- **Christian Educational Services (CES)** run by Mark Graeser, John Lynn and John Schoenheit. This group overemphasizes the letter to the Ephesians, and teachings of the late E.W. Bullinger, some of which are incorrect.
- **Christadelphianism** was originated by the Unitarian believer and medical doctor John Thomas around 1848. Splits began to occur from 1873 when:
 1. Edward Turney, separated over the issue of the atonement and the nature of Christ. He formed **The Nazarene Fellowship** which died out after he died, but was revived by Ernest Brady in the 1950s.
 2. A further split came in 1898 over who would be raised to judgment at the return of Christ, so that an **Amended Fellowship** formed because the majority of Christadelphians believe that the judgment is not limited to baptized believers. Other Christadelphians, mainly in the USA, opposed the amendment and are now known as the **Unamended Fellowship**.
 3. **The Berean Fellowship** formed in 1923 over the issue of military service.
 4. **The Dawn Fellowship** formed in 1942 by breaking with the Berean Fellowship over the issue of marriage and divorce.

The two most significant problems with all these Christadelphian related groups concerns the nature of Satan and the demons, and the nature of Christ as a sinner, although **The Nazarene Fellowship** corrects that view.

- **The Church of God-Abrahamic Faith** came into existence around 1850 when a number of Unitarian believers — primarily Joseph Marsh and Benjamin Wilson (author of the Diaglott) — came together for Bible study. A small group from this denomination believe the same as do Christadelphians regarding the nature of Satan and the demons.
- **Jehovah’s Witnesses**

The subjects that are relevant to the Jehovah’s Witnesses are examined in **Volume Four**. Also details of the various splinter groups that have broken away from them can be found in the introduction to **Volume Four**.

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDIES

These studies are presented as an attempt to draw together the many Scriptures that have a bearing on various Bible subjects. No claim is made of being correct on all points, in spite of every effort made to express what is factually correct. However, the truth-seeker has to ensure that the reading of these texts is never taken out of context. So although these studies present mainly single or partial verses it is strongly recommended that the reader examine from his or her own Bible the context in which these verses are set. Of course, the reason for the single or partial verses is to focus on the point the text makes and hence to gain clarity. Also it is hoped that the sub-headings, the highlighted key words and the comments will help to connect the related information and act as a guide to bring out the teaching of the Bible on each subject. *The approach taken here is to use the **plainly understood texts** as the basis to understand the more difficult texts and also to refer to the scholarly works.* Although often dismissed by some truth-seekers, the work of Bible scholars can be very valuable toward gaining a correct understanding of Scripture. In fact, Jesus purposed to make such a provision when he said: *“Therefore, I send you prophets, wise men, and **scribes** (NKJV)”* (Matthew 23:34). Such *scribes* were not public speakers with little scholarly background but, in Bible times, were a class of professional Bible scholars. We, too, need to take advantage of the up-to-date work of such professionals today. This helps in the areas of Bible translation, greater understanding of Jewish culture and ways of Jewish

expression, more accurate definitions of Bible terms and analysis of the meanings in English. However, there is the warning for us to be discerning with such works.

We also make acknowledgement of the fact that many non-professional individual seekers after truth have also researched these subjects and have revealed numerous points that are set out in these studies.

Whenever I have updated a Study the new point is identified by a vertical line set to the right of the new section.

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