

The Replacement of Christ

Introduction

The key issue for living the Christian life is to continually focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer must look to Jesus; he must be pre-eminent in our lives.

The chief goal of the Devil in spiritual warfare is to get the Christian to take his focus away from Christ and put it somewhere else. This may involve sin, but it often results from following false teachers, who themselves have been deceived in some way. Thus most heretical movements involve taking the attention away from Christ and placing it somewhere else.

This is a simple summary of some examples of this.

Church, sect, preacher or doctrine	Where the attention is placed
Doctrinal issues	
Dispensationalism.	Israel in the plan of God.
Pre-Tribulationism (a variant of Dispensationalism).	The (fake) Secret Rapture.
Arminianism.	The sovereign will of man.
Universalism.	Man.
Pelagianism.	Man's natural ability to keep the law of God.
Semi-Pelagianism.	Man's ability to please God by keeping the law with help from church institutions or universal grace.
Finneyism (Oberlin Theology).	Extreme Arminianism verging on Pelagianism.
Open Theism.	Man as sovereign.
Reconstructionism (Theonomy).	The Mosaic Law.
Theological Liberalism.	Man as a rational, independent being. Christian ethics without supernaturalism.
Modernism.	Cf. Liberalism. Denial of the virgin birth, miracles, and resurrection of Christ. Focus on a false Christ.
Evolutionary theory.	There is no God. Creation is a random accident of nature. Man is an evolved being from a line of creatures (e.g. fish, amphibian, reptile, mammal, ape). Focus on false science and hypotheses.
Anglo-Israelism	The British people.
Modalism (various forms).	Christ is not God. The one God expresses himself in various modes of being. Focus on unitarianism.
Arianism (various forms).	Christ is not equal with God but is a creation of God. Focus on unitarianism.
Adoptionism.	Christ is not equal with God but is an elevated man. Focus on unitarianism.
Ebionism.	Christ is not God but is a natural man gifted to be a great prophet. The focus is on the OT.
Quietism.	Mysticism.
Socinianism.	Christ is a mere man. but was raised to authority. Denial of the atonement. Focus on the wrong Christ.

Philosophical issues	
Existentialism.	Man as a free and sovereign independent agent.
Pantheism.	Nature; the universe; monism.
Idealism.	The mind.
Materialism.	Matter.
Mechanism.	Physical laws.
Rationalism.	The mind.
Empiricism.	Human sense experience.
Determinism.	Fatalism.
Deism.	An estranged God.
Atheism.	Man.
Scepticism.	Man's rational intelligence.
Positivism.	Science and mathematics.
Denominations	
Unitarianism.	Man.
Quakerism.	The inner thoughts of man.
Anglicanism.	The Anglican synod.
Baptist churches.	<p>A very mixed bag.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some focus on baptism by immersion and exclusivity. ● Some focus on historic church standards. ● Some (General Baptists) are Arminian. ● Some are liberal. ● Some are driven by church councils. ● Some are sound.
Presbyterian churches.	<p>A very mixed bag.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some focus upon historic standards. ● Some are liberal. ● Many are Amyraldian. ● Some are focused on Federal Vision. ● Some are sound.
Lutherans.	<p>Quite mixed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some focus on Martin Luther. ● Some focus on historic standards. ● Many are liberal. ● Some focus on the authority of the synod.
Roman Catholic Church.	The Pope; Mary, cardinals and priests, the Mass.
Eastern Orthodox Church.	Icons, rituals, the priestly hierarchy, the written works of historic leaders.
Pentecostal churches.	Tongues and prophecy; authoritarian leaders.
Charismatic Churches.	Spiritual gifts, authoritarian leaders, and exuberant worship.
'Enthusiast' movements. [Historical forms of proto-Charismaticism.]	Prophecy, ecstatic experiences, swooning, lack of self-control.
Signs and Wonders Movement.	Healing and miracles; John Wimber.
New Apostolic Reformation.	Human authoritarianism and spiritual warfare.

The Holiness Movement.	Instant sanctification as a second blessing.
Methodism.	In the early period: John Wesley; in the modern period: Liberalism.
The Brethren.	The exclusives slavishly followed John Darby's authoritarianism. The Open Brethren sought to be more Biblical and open.
Salvation Army.	William Booth.
Cults and Sects	
Word of Faith Movement.	Man; with faith and authority.
Messianic Christianity / Christian Zionism / Jewish Root Movement.	Israel and Jews in general.
New Calvinists.	Amyraldism.
Modern Gnosticism.	Transcendental things mediated by hidden knowledge gained through initiation.
Toronto Blessing cults.	The generation of exotic phenomena stimulated by passivity, suggestibility, hypnosis and human manipulation mixed with occult ideas. Lack of self-control.
Branhamism.	William Marrion Branham.
Celtic Spirituality.	Celtic Irish saints and their teachings.
Bethel Church.	Bill Johnson.
Jehovah's Witnesses.	Church leadership.
Mormons.	The Book of Mormon; the Pearl of Great Price; the Book of Doctrines and Covenants and the revelations of church prophets.
Christian Science.	Mary Baker Eddy.
The Shakers.	Mother Ann Lee.
New Thought., Divine Science.	The ideas of PP Quimby.
The Disciples of Christ and The Churches of Christ.	Alexander Campbell.
Scientology.	The ideas of L Ron Hubbard.
The Children of God.	David 'Moses' Berg.
Christadelphians.	John Thomas.
Church of God of Prophecy.	R. G. Spurling and AJ Tomlinson.
The Emerging Church.	Human subjectivity and community.
The Higher Life Movement.	Robert Pearsall Smith, Hanna Whitall Smith, Evan Hopkins, HCG Moule and William E Boardman. Focus on sanctification by faith.
Jesus Army.	Noel Stanton.
Latter Rain Movement.	Occult ideas about power.
Seeker Sensitive churches.	A focus upon welcoming sinners and dumbing-down church meetings.
Seventh-Day Adventism.	William Miller and Ellen G White.
The Shouters.	Witness Lee.
Church of the New Jerusalem,	Emanuel Swedenborg.
Unification church.	Sun Myung Moon.
Worldwide Church of God.	Herbert W Armstrong.

Caveat

I do not imply that there are no godly, sincere believers in these groups. Indeed, I have friends who are faithful and zealous for God who are sadly caught up in some of them.

My purpose here is to look at the historic tendency of these groups in their overall epistemology. In practice, whence do they derive the distinctives of their teaching and authority?

Conclusion

When you direct your focus away from the Lord Jesus Christ you create a vacuum and that space is quickly filled by demonic ideas. Paul calls the heresies of men, 'giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons' (1 Tim 4:1).

These demonic ideas are tailor made to suit the leader spouting the false teaching, and so they vary from group to group. By this method the Devil can deceive a greater number of people. Gullible folk gravitate towards what tickles their fancy and thus multiple sects rise up. It never ceases to amaze me how many people commit themselves to a populist faction that is clearly false. One answer to this is that very many people in churches are not believers at all.

Christ *is* all. Col 3:11

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