ST. PAUL’S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Religious Education Discussion

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*Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*

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Chapter Seven: Non-Mainstream Christians

1. When we look at the practices of the ancient Church, did it take an even or uneven approach to receiving converts from other faiths?

2. What do we mean by even or uneven?

3. Which fourth century Church father advocated the uneven approach?

4. Do the Unitarians believe in the Holy Trinity?

5. Can you name any prominent Unitarians from history?

6. Describe their doctrine of Universalism. Is it accepted by the Orthodox?

7. While Orthodoxy might reject certain beliefs and behaviors, does it ever reject the human person?

8. In 1820, in upstate New York, what fourteen-year-old farm boy began the journey that would result in the Mormon religion?

9. Who was his successor?

10. What books do Mormons’ regard as sacred scripture?

11. Much like the other restorationist movements of the nineteenth century, Mormonism claims to do what?

12. Did Mormonism really permit polygamy?

13. Do they still permit “plural marriage?”

14. What is the main group of Mormonism?

15. Is the God of Mormonism eternally divine?

16. According to Mormonism, what is Satan’s relationship to Jesus?

17. What does the author identify as the key problem in Mormon theology?

18. What doctrine distinguishes Judaism and Christianity from paganism?

19. According to Mormonism, can someone be converted to it even after they have died?

20. Who founded the Christian Scientist movement and when?

21. What does the author identify as their most distinctive teaching?

22. Name some of the ancient heresies which seem to inform Christian Scientist teaching.

23. Name their popular news source.

24. Who founded the Jehovah’s Witness?

25. How many people, out of all who ever lived, will actually make it into heaven?

26. Are the Witnesses trinitarian?

27. Is Jesus divine according to Jehovah Witness doctrine?

28. How do they view the Cross?

29. Do the Orthodox agree with their translation of the Bible?

30. Describe what they believe will happen when the end comes.

31. Do they celebrate Christmas or birthdays?

32. The Non-Mainstream Christians discussed in this chapter were typically founded by individuals who claimed an authority divorced from the Church. On whose authority was the Orthodox Church founded?

33. Is the Orthodox Church minimalist or maximalist in its approach to the Christian life?

Chapter Eight: Non-Christian Religions

1. Has pietism made it more or less likely for the casual observer to believe that all or most religions are really trying to accomplish the same thing? Why or why not?

2. What examples does the author use to highlight the differences between religions?

3. Do you think it probable that one might understand the doctrine of another religion better than its adherents do? Why or why not?

4. What is perennialism?

5. Is it valid?

6. Of all the non-Christian religions, with which one do Orthodox Christians have the most in common?

7. Is today’s Judaism a modern expression of what existed in the time of Jesus?

8. From who did modern Judaism descend?

9. What does the author identify as the primary difference between Judaism and Christianity?

10. When did Muhammad begin to receive the revelation of what is now known as the Qur’an?

11. What does the word *Islam* mean?

12. How does Islam see itself in relation to Christianity?

13. How do they understand Jesus?

14. What is the place of the Qur’an in Islam?

15. In Islam, is communion with God possible?

16. In what ways does Islam resemble ancient paganism?

17. How does this contrast with Orthodox Christianity?

18. What are the two primary traditions of Islam?

19. What issue was the cause of their schism?

20. Has the Middle East, Turkey, and much of western Asia always been Muslim?

21. What is the *dhimmi*?

22. Has pietism infiltrated Islam?

23. Which country has the most Muslims?

24. How does the author describe Hinduism?

25. How far back it time does it stretch?

26. Describe how Hinduism views the nature of the soul and the body.

27. Does Hinduism observe a caste system?

28. What does the author identify as the hardest part in talking about Christ to Hindus?

29. How is Hinduism similar to Orthodoxy?

30. How many adherents do they have?

31. When did Buddhism arise?

32. What is its relationship to Hinduism?

33. What is the goal of Buddhism?

34. How does this contrast with Orthodoxy?

35. What does Orthodoxy share in parallel with Buddhism?

36. What point did St Justin Martyr make in the second century?

37. What does this mean?