

-----  
Copyright 1994 by the Christian Research Institute.  
-----

COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION LIMITATIONS:

This data file is the sole property of the Christian Research Institute. It may not be altered or edited in any way. It may be reproduced only in its entirety for circulation as "freeware," without charge. All reproductions of this data file must contain the copyright notice (i.e., "Copyright 1994 by the Christian Research Institute"). This data file may not be used without the permission of the Christian Research Institute for resale or the enhancement of any other product sold. This includes all of its content with the exception of a few brief quotations not to exceed more than 500 words.

If you desire to reproduce less than 500 words of this data file for resale or the enhancement of any other product for resale, please give the following source credit: Copyright 1994 by the Christian Research Institute, P.O. Box 500-TC, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693.  
-----

"Apologetics: Still Relevant Today?", "Is Roman Catholicism a Cult?" and "The Day the 'Magic' Died" (articles from the From The President column of the Christian Research Newsletter, Volume 4: Numbers 3, 4 and 5, 1991) by Hank Hanegraaff.

The editor of the Christian Research Newsletter is Ron Rhodes.

-----  
\*Apologetics: Still Relevant Today?\* by Hank Hanegraaff  
(From the From The President column of the Christian Research Newsletter, Volume 4: Number 3, 1991)  
-----

"The apologists -- I'm telling you they could make falling off a stool difficult. You'd have to go to college to learn how to fall off a stool if you were an apologist....So, I'm not impressed with the apologist any longer. And I may as well get it out -- I used to be one! And God forgive me, and I promise not to ever do it again."

So said prominent televangelist John Avanzini during TBN's annual Fall "Praise-a-thon." During a time when apologetics -- the defense of the faith -- is more important than ever before, Avanzini represents a growing number of Christian leaders who attack apologetics as being irrelevant and even divisive. In sharp contrast to Avanzini, Dr. Walter Martin believed that the apologetics ministry of CRI would be more important in the decade of the 1990s than it was when he originally founded it thirty years ago.

How relevant is apologetics today? How big a role should apologetics play in a Christian's witness? And, above all, is apologetics biblical? Let us briefly consider these questions.

To see just how relevant apologetics is today, we need only take a quick survey of the world around us. Whether we look at the world on a global scale or merely peek into our own little "neck of the woods," it certainly doesn't take long to realize that we are literally being inundated with a plethora of beliefs and ideologies. From secular humanism to New Age mysticism, people everywhere are being bombarded with an onslaught of false ideas and world views. (A "world view" is simply an interpretive framework \_through which\_ or \_by which\_ one interprets the world around him.)

What makes these false world views so appealing is their apparent capacity to make sense of the universe in which we live. Each respective world view purports to give \_the\_ correct account of reality, thereby giving people some point of reference by which to order their lives. And it's fair to say that world views affect practically every aspect of a person's life.

Consider, for example, a person with a humanistic/atheistic

world view. Since such a person considers mankind to be "the measure of all things," he or she generally believes that we need only turn to human ingenuity and wisdom to supply every needed answer. Transcendentally important issues dealing with the purpose and meaning of life are relegated purely to human thoughts on the matter; ethical and moral dilemmas are consigned to mere individual or cultural opinions; and the absolute foundation of truth is reduced to a rubble of relativism. Now, while some may hold this world view to be reasonably sound and personally satisfying, the fact remains that it is ultimately a road leading to eternal destruction (Prov. 14:12).

What is the Christian's responsibility in the face of these competing world views? Certainly most Christians are aware of their responsibility to reach a dying world with God's message. No less an authority than Jesus exhorts us to proclaim the Good News (Matt. 10:27) and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). However, the same Bible that compels us to preach the Good News urges us to contend for the faith as well (Jude 3). Apologetics is thus not a mere option left to the believer. Rather, it should be an essential element of the believer's life.

Writing in a world steeped in mystery cults, the apostle Peter admonished believers to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15 NIV). Only by meeting honest objections with biblical answers can we "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). It was in this spirit that Paul vigorously defended the gospel (Acts 26:1-2; Phil. 1:7, 16), charging Timothy and Titus to do the same (2 Tim. 2:23-26; 4:2-5; Titus 1:9-14).

In the Book of Acts, we find the early Christians presenting reasoned answers to a variety of charges made against Christianity. To the Jews the church pointed out that Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Acts 3:17-26). To the Gentiles the church argued that God was calling them to turn from superstitious religions to the true God revealed in Jesus Christ (19:1-22). In all their apologetics, the early church emphasized the undeniable event of the resurrection of Christ (4:10; 17:31). And, unlike some Christians today, the early church was not plagued by the disease "non-rock-a-boatus"; indeed, the early Christians defended the faith whenever and wherever the opportunity arose. We must commit to doing the same.

Far from being some abstract discipline or quaint pastime for a select few (such as theologians and ministers), apologetics is in reality an immensely practical tool for every single member of the body of Christ. And the need for apologetics today is critical. Believers must realize that we are living in a post-Christian era, with a host of religions, cults, and occultic systems vying continuously for people's commitments and, indeed, for their very lives. We must face these challenges head-on.

Using apologetics, equipped Christians can show that the Christian world view is consistent, coherent, and corresponds to reality over and above all other competing world views. Apologetics also shows that Christianity is both spiritually and intellectually fulfilling, and that Christianity is nothing less than the truth (John 17:17). (That Christianity has an intellectual or rational element is clear in Jesus' words about loving God not only with all our heart, soul, and strength, but also with all our mind; Mark 12:29.)

CRI is presently in the midst of a period of unprecedented growth. The volume of incoming correspondence and calls continues to mount with each passing day. All this leads me to conclude that the number of people hungry for sound answers is anything but diminishing. And because of this, we are more committed than ever -- Avanzini's comments notwithstanding -- to uphold, defend, and promote the historic orthodox Christian faith, through which alone salvation is offered to humanity.

Is apologetics still relevant today? In my thinking, apologetics has never been more relevant than it is today. And all of us at CRI are deeply thankful for the numerous men and women worldwide who are willing to stand with us in the battle of defending the faith against all competing truth claims. May God continue to sustain all those committed to standing for truth.

-----  
\*Is Roman Catholicism a Cult?\* by Hank Hanegraaff  
(From the From The President column of the Christian Research  
Newsletter, Volume 4: Number 4, 1991)  
-----

In his article entitled "A Cult Is a Cult," Dave Hunt argues that "to deny that Roman Catholicism is a cult is to repudiate the Reformation and mock the more than 1 million martyrs who died at Rome's hands as though they gave their lives for no good reason!" (CIB Bulletin, June 1991, p. 1). Hunt follows these strong words with an impassioned appeal to his supporters to write those "who cooperate with Roman Catholicism and deny that it is a cult" (p. 3).

Among those who "cooperate" with Roman Catholicism, Hunt lists the Christian Research Institute. He then goes on to urge his constituents to ask organizations such as CRI to "consider the facts and to do, as one former priest asked Hank Hanegraaff of CRI to do: The exact same base you use so fruitfully to expose and to refute cults and apostate Christians, I ask you to use consistently in application to Rome" (p. 3).

As a result of Hunt's appeal, I have received numerous letters and phone calls -- even during our "Bible Answer Man" broadcast -- asking me to brand Roman Catholicism a cult. In some instances, I've been accused of not having the guts to stand against the church of Rome because of its immense power and vast resources.

In response to these phone calls, letters, and allegations, I want to take this opportunity to clearly enunciate my reasons for not labeling Catholicism a cult.

To begin, let us define what we mean by the word cult. This word is typically used in a sociological sense by the secular media to describe religious or semireligious groups whose members are controlled in virtually every aspect of their lives -- both doctrine and practice -- by a single authoritarian individual. A good example of this is the Unification church under the leadership of Rev. Sun Myung Moon.

To orthodox Christians, however, the word cult takes on a wider meaning. For not only can groups be considered cultic in a sociological sense, they may be deemed cultic in a theological sense as well.

A good working definition of a cult from a theological perspective is any modern-day religion that claims to be Christian while explicitly denying one or more of the essential doctrines of the historic Christian faith -- such as the Trinity or the unique deity of Jesus Christ. Thus, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Christian Scientists qualify as cultists in a theological sense.

Since Roman Catholicism is not a modern-day religious movement, it can hardly be categorized as a cult. And, far from denying the essentials of the historic Christian faith, Roman Catholicism affirms such basic doctrines as the Trinity, Christ's deity and humanity, His virgin birth, physical atonement, bodily resurrection, and second coming. In fact, with regard to these essentials, evangelicals have more in common with conservative Roman Catholics than they do with liberal Protestants. For these and other reasons, it would be patently inaccurate and unfair to classify Roman Catholicism as a cult.

Now, having said that, let me hasten to add that just because

I believe it is inaccurate to label the Catholic church a cult does not mean I am soft on Catholicism. But if we are to fault Roman Catholicism (or any group for that matter), we should do so for the right reasons.

For example, I have no hesitation in asserting that Roman Catholicism compromises and confuses the doctrine of salvation -- that is, justification by grace through faith in Christ. Classical Catholicism holds the view that salvation involves a combination of faith and infused righteousness. In other words, God's grace is said to give us the capacity to become righteous by washing away our sins and enabling us to perform good works through which we are then justified.

Biblical Christianity, by contrast, teaches that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8-9). To put it in perspective, we are saved by grace and by grace alone; but we are saved unto good works (2 Cor. 9:8). Justification comes first; good works follow.

Besides confusion on the doctrine of salvation, Catholics embrace a number of unbiblical doctrines such as the belief in purgatory and penance. Many even go so far as to consider Mary, the human mother of Jesus, to be coredemptrix with the Redeemer, Jesus Christ -- although they clarify that it was Jesus alone who bought our redemption with His blood (see Elliot Miller's two-part series, "The Mary of Roman Catholicism," in the CHRISTIAN RESEARCH JOURNAL, Summer and Fall 1990). Furthermore, while Catholics support the authority of the Bible, they also assert that the traditions of the Roman church are as authoritative as the revealed Word of God. That is precisely the reason why scores of practices and beliefs having no basis in Scripture are accepted by Catholics as "gospel truth."

So, once again, let me affirm that I am not at all being soft on Catholicism, nor am I giving Catholicism a clean bill of health. CRI has always forthrightly spoken out against the aberrations within Roman Catholicism. Yet, we have also steadfastly refused to paint Catholicism into the same corner with the cults. Avoiding the broad strokes of a broom, we have attempted to paint the picture of contemporary Catholicism with the precision of an artist's brush.

If we are not accurate in our definitions, terminologies, and concerns, we run the risk of alienating and losing those we are trying to reach. They will more than likely write us off if they perceive us as speaking out of the abundance of our ignorance rather than in a well-reasoned fashion.

CRI has had a reputation during our 30-year history of being credible and accurate. Even secular news organizations, who are worlds apart from us when it comes to world views, rely on the accuracy of CRI's data and documentation. They know we have done our research and that the information we present is solid.

Because we have sought to be fair and accurate, CRI has had the tremendous privilege of reaching rather than repelling those who are searching for truth. Not only have scores of cultists come to faith in Christ but many within Catholicism who did not have an intimate personal relationship with Christ are coming to know Him as well.

Editor's note: We have available upon request a series of "CRI Perspectives" covering a wide range of issues dealing with Roman Catholicism. Write for your free copies.

-----  
\*The Day the "Magic" Died\* by Hank Hanegraaff  
(From the From The President column of the Christian Research  
Newsletter, Volume 4: Number 5, 1991)  
-----

Why do bad things happen to good people? How could a role model

to millions worldwide, a man that even the President of the United States considers a hero, contract a dreaded disease such as AIDS?

If someone like "Magic" Johnson -- arguably the most unselfish athlete of all time -- tests "HIV positive," something must be terribly wrong. A newspaper writer, echoing the sentiments of the masses, exclaimed: "Wait a minute, God. Please! You can't do that to us! Not Magic. Tell us it's not Magic. There has just been a terrible mistake made here. Magic doesn't deserve this....I tell you, it's a ghastly mistake. Somebody up there goofed."

Well, did God make an awful mistake? Or has something else gone wrong? Could it be that our culture has decided to live outside the boundaries God set for us, and that the real problem is not God at all? Could it be that we as a nation have violated God's laws -- foolishly thinking we could do so with impunity? Could it be that sin is the real culprit, and that the AIDS pandemic is simply its ripened fruit?

Perhaps it would be insightful to consider some of the details before pronouncing Magic a "hero" and denouncing God as a "heel." Pamela McGee, a member of the 1984 U.S. Olympic Women's Basketball team and a dear friend to Magic Johnson, issued the following statement in a recent Los Angeles Times article:

I guess it didn't surprise me that Magic had the disease. Knowing his flamboyant lifestyle, it was bound to happen sooner or later. Magic's closest friends always knew him as a major player and womanizer. He had one-night stands with what he calls 'freaks' across America....The reason he probably made it public is to warn the thousands of women he has slept with. So it didn't surprise me that he had the insidious disease we call HIV.

Magic Johnson himself has freely admitted in a recent issue of Sports Illustrated magazine that from the time he first arrived in Los Angeles, he accommodated as many women sexually as he could. The question is, Why should that surprise any of us? Just look at some of our other modern-day "heros": Pete Rose, a major league gambler; Sugar Ray Leonard, who directed some of his most famous punches at his diminutive wife; Len Bias, who "made a living at the free-throw line" but missed his shot at life by free-basing cocaine.

And the list continues. Take, for example, Wilt Chamberlain's recent claim that he had sex with nearly 20,000 women -- an amazing feat considering he is only 55 years of age. Then, of course, there is the case of Thomas "Hollywood" Henderson, the infamous Dallas linebacker who, in his book Out of Control: Confessions of an NFL Casualty, confessed to having had "affairs with over a thousand women, from one-night stands to three-day romances to four or five women a night at orgies," all during his five-year stay with the Cowboys.

In light of these examples (as well as many others that could be cited), it seems painfully clear that the role models of millions of Americans may not really be as heroic as they appear. Conversely, God is not the heel that many people -- such as the newspaper writer cited earlier -- make Him out to be.

In my judgment, if Magic Johnson is to become a true hero to humanity, he should strive to make sure that the message he sends his fans is wholly on target. Instead of urging the public to make sexual immorality a little safer through the use of condoms, Magic needs to encourage people to abstain from sexual immorality altogether. This stance, which is in keeping with God's Word, is the only real protection against HIV.

The truth is that America does not need rubbers; America needs ethics. The real heroes in the battle against the species-threatening pandemic of AIDS are those individuals who willingly stand against powerful bureaucrats, militant activists, media moguls, and so-called health experts who have become little

more than "panic managers." Facing such adversaries takes real courage. Risking the wrath of the homosexual lobby, to draw just one illustration, makes the pressure of shooting the last shot in the final game of an NBA championship series pale by comparison.

In fact, the pressure in this forum is great enough to cause credible Christian leaders, such as C. Everett Koop, to cave in under the pressure. Here was a spokesman for Christian ethics who was in a position to force a debate on the real issues, a man who was ideally situated to force America and, indeed, the world to face up to the facts regarding AIDS.

Koop had the boldness to call for a smoke-free society by the year 2000 in the interest of health. By the same token, he surely could have exhibited enough intestinal fortitude to call for a "perversion-free" society in the interest of humanity, especially in light of a species-threatening disease such as AIDS. And he did just that in 1979. But in 1986, after becoming the Surgeon General of the United States of America, Koop issued the following words amidst pressure from an overpowering and aggressive pagan public:

Unless it is possible to know with absolute certainty that neither you or your partner is carrying the virus of AIDS, you must use protective behavior...If you suspect that your partner has been exposed by previous heterosexual or homosexual behavior or use of I-V drugs with shared needles and syringes, a rubber condom should always be used during sexual intercourse -- vaginal or rectal.

Thus, when it really counted, Koop ended up repeating the standard party line of such groups as Planned Parenthood, the National Gay Task Force, and the National Education Association.

Today, we have another giant who can slow down an incredible fourth-quarter rally by a formidable opponent. He can play it safe by passing off the lie of "safe sex" via condoms to an unsuspecting public, or he can become a hero in the true sense of the word. A hero will not fold under pressure, but will instead go for the game-winning play.

Well, Magic, it's "Winning Time!" Are you going to pass or shoot?

-----  
End of document, CRN0039A.TXT (original CRI file name),  
"Apologetics: Still Relevant Today?", "Is Roman Catholicism a  
Cult?" and "The Day the 'Magic' Died"  
release A, June 30, 1994  
R. Poll, CRI

(A special note of thanks to Bob and Pat Hunter for their help in the preparation of this ASCII file for BBS circulation.)

-----  
YOURS FOR THE ASKING

The Christian Research Institute (CRI) -- founded in 1960 by the late Dr. Walter R. Martin -- is a clearing house for current, in-depth information on new religious movements and aberrant Christian teachings. We provide well-reasoned, carefully-researched answers to concepts and ideas that challenge orthodox Christianity.

Did you know that CRI has a wealth of information on various topics that is yours for the asking? We offer a wide variety of articles and fact sheets free of charge. Our informative newsletter is freely available upon request as well. Write or call us today for information on topics of interest to you. Our first-rate staff will do everything possible to help you.

Christian Research Institute

P.O. Box 500-TC  
San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693

(714) 855-9926

-----  
End of file.