



STATEMENT DO035

Delivered from Twelve Years of Occult Bondage The Personal Testimony of Karen Winterburn

Although my family did not practice any religion, I decided at age 14 to join the Catholic church. I quickly developed a strong appetite for the Word of God. In fact, I had such a strong attraction to the Scriptures that I bought three different translations of the Bible — all of which I read regularly.

But my life soon took a turn for the worse. Following my high school graduation, I entered a very liberal convent. I immersed myself in liberal theology, existential philosophy, and the sociology of religion.

I no longer read Scripture without being armed with my liberal “debunking tools,” and prayer became less and less personal communion with God and more of a general meditation — until even that disappeared. I had turned my back on the Lord and the Christian life.

I left the religious order and for the next four years tried out Marxism, hedonism, and humanism — in that order. But none of them filled the void created in my heart by turning away from the living God. None of them helped me explain the residual nagging sense of the presence of God. God refused to leave me, but I persisted in looking for an alternative explanation for Him. And I found one (so I thought) — the occult!

People I talked to — non-Christians, Christians, and even clergy — called my dabbling in the occult my “spiritual journey” or “pilgrimage.” Everyone seemed to romanticize it. But this “spiritual journey” didn’t turn out to be as purposeful and exciting as it had first promised to be. I found myself longing to find my way back to true spiritual reality. The problem, however, was that I had developed serious doubts about the credibility of Christianity (an outgrowth of my liberal education).

So, for twelve long years, I remained deeply entrenched in the occult. I was a professional astrologer the whole time — teaching, doing conferences, and counseling.

I was also a trance medium for 16 months. I have over one hundred pages of transcript material from this period — much of which was generated through me while working with a scientific team in Chicago: a psychologist, a physician/psychiatrist, a physicist, and a parapsychologist. This team tested me, hypnotized me, and worked with the material I produced while in an altered state of consciousness. I explained and discussed issues in subatomic physics that were “right on target,” according to the physicist. I clarified problems in the psychologist’s research on brain waves and biofeedback without even knowing he was doing this research.

None of this scientific material originated in me. I knew that very well, but didn’t want to believe it, preferring instead the message I was getting from my inner “source”: this knowledge was being generated by my own “expanding consciousness.” I was in touch with my “lighter self,” my “God self,” my “Christ consciousness” — and believed this expansion of knowledge and awareness could continue indefinitely.

Besides being a trance medium, I worked a lot with different methods of divination: numerology, psychometry, I Ching, and Tarot cards. I practiced and taught visualization techniques — working from the Western Kabbalah and Eastern yogas, modern inner-healing therapies, and guided meditations.

Over the last five years of this twelve-year period, I was involved in a syncretistic cult Church Universal and Triumphant (CUT). This cult integrates several world religions and many strands of occult tradition. It’s an outgrowth of the “I AM” movement of the 1930s and the Theosophical movement before that.

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

CUT presents itself as the religion of the New Age: *ushering out* the “Age of Pisces” under the leadership and authority of the “Ascended Master” Jesus Christ and *ushering in* the “Age of Aquarius” under the authority of Saint Germain —whom CUT leaders believe to be an even greater Ascended Master. My earlier trance medium experience had prepared me to accept in detail the message and gestalt of this bizarre group.

While involved with this group, I tried defining my Christianity (with which I was still very uncomfortable) through “Christian metaphysics”: a baptized version of the positive thinking schools and self-help technologies, and founded squarely on the philosophy and method of mental sorcery. I thoroughly absorbed the writings of Emmet Fox during this time.

Over this twelve-year period, I shut out the Lord and worshipped every false god I bumped into along the way: Gautama Buddha, Lord Maitreya, Hindu gods, Greek gods, Roman gods, Egyptian gods, Chaldean gods, the Cosmic Christ, the Solar Logos, the Ascended Masters, the Divine Mother, the Nameless Void — and finally my “higher self,” my “Christ self,” and my “God self.”

“Are you the one?” I would ask. They all answered, “yes.”

During this time, it became increasingly clear to me that spiritual growth was not something I’d been *enhancing*, but *preventing*. For three months I forced myself to face this issue. Over the years I’d had many interesting spiritual experiences, but there had been *no spiritual growth* or life. I realized I had been turning circles and was no closer to the truth now than when I first started searching for it.

Having exhausted all these alternatives to Jesus Christ and coming up so short of the glory of God, I began to panic. I went through a week of pure hell that seemed like a lifetime. God had suddenly become so “other” to me. The only thing I began to see clearly about God that week was that He is utterly *holy* and *righteous*. No other god even makes a pretense at being holy and righteous. At this time, the consciousness of personal sin reentered my life — what a nauseating, embarrassing, and defeating reality! Seeing myself in this honest light was a shattering experience for me.

Then I remembered a verse I’d read somewhere in the Bible: “The LORD is my righteousness.” I began to see — possibly for the first time — that the very holiness that must in justice *consume* me, can be *imputed* to me as a gift from God! What an incredible realization this was. This was utterly against every principle and tenet of New Age spirituality.

During this time, a verse I did not even know I had memorized came to my mind: “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). I felt a combination of relief and terror at this memory. How could all my twelve years of occult involvement have been a spiritual placebo, I wondered?

Revelation 3:20 surfaced in my mind the same way: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with Me.” Jesus Christ was alive and well and knocking at my door! And this was most assuredly not the Ascended Master Jesus Christ. This was the real live Person! I was now willing to dismantle my altars to false gods; to put away *The Bhagavad Gita* and the I Ching.

“Lord,” I asked, “what do you want me to do now?” After asking this question, I remember opening my Bible to Acts 9:6 where Paul had fallen to the ground when Jesus appeared in a blinding vision to him on the road to Damascus: “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do,” Jesus said to him. When Paul arrived at this city, the disciple Ananias helped him. I applied this verse to my situation, and took it to mean that I should just put myself “out there” and assistance would be arranged.

Little did I know I would soon meet my own “Ananias.” I had on my laundry room table several stacks of graduate school bulletins and catalogues. During the last year of my spiritual “pilgrimage,” I had somehow gotten the idea that I’d understand everything a lot better if I just had a doctorate in theology. So I had sent away for catalogues from every school of theology within a 50-mile radius.

Then I realized I had some preliminaries to settle first, such as, *which* theology? Buddhist? Unitarian? Catholic? Church Universal and Triumphant? One evening I absent mindedly paged through one of the catalogues: Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. I immediately noticed the statement of faith. What an odd thing to put in a school

CRI, P.O. Box 8500, Charlotte, NC 28271
Phone (704) 887-8200 and Fax (704) 887-8299

catalogue, I thought to myself. I read it and had two distinct and warring reactions. One part of me said, “No one with half a brain could assent to this. Throw this into the fireplace and forget it!” The other part of me said, “Thank God someone still believes.” I read through the catalogue and it became increasingly clear to me that the commitment to scholarship was equaled by a corporate commitment to a life devoted to Jesus Christ as God and Savior.

The thought occurred to me that I should talk to someone from Trinity. “But who?” I asked myself. I decided to scan through the list of faculty in the catalogue and my finger stopped on the name of Dr. John Feinberg. I called Dr. Feinberg and told him I had gotten his name in a roundabout way and needed to talk to him about “church membership.”

When I arrived at Dr. Feinberg’s home, I opened two doors: his as well as the one I had closed on the Lord years ago. He opened the Bible with me and helped me understand myself and my experience in the light of what it said. He confirmed the exclusivity of the claim of Christ on my life. He also directed me to a good church that remains to this day my spiritual home. The worship, study, and fellowship at this church have been my major source of growth since my deliverance from occultism.

My restoration to the Father through trusting in Jesus Christ has been the most invigorating, eye-opening, and healing event in my life. I really know what it is to be “bought” with a price, to have someone else foot the bill for my rebellious and disobedient squandering. Jesus paid that price.

I can’t praise and thank God enough for what He has done for me. When you’re finally convinced of the hopelessness of your own efforts — when you realize that you’re as powerless as you are rebellious — that your Creator is sovereign and that you, a creature, can’t restore yourself to Him — and then *He reaches down* and digs you out of the heap, scrubs you off, and brings you home — I can only respond, “What a Father!”

In this earthly pilgrimage, we might not be sure of the terrain, and the environment is definitely hostile. But as Christians, we know where we’ve come from, we know where we’re going, we know how we’re getting there, and we’ve got hold of the hand that is taking us! *Praise God for this wonderful thing He’s done!*

Editor’s Note: Karen Winterburn is the director of the Chicago and Suburban Branch of Mt. Carmel Outreach. P.O. Box 6407, Evanston, IL 60202.