

The Analysis of a *Mobaituanti* from the Perspective of Religion— The Case Study of the Church of Almighty God

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A note about this paper. *The Church of Almighty God, which originated in China in the early 1990s, is a typical mobaituanti (lit. a worship group) and has exerted extensive influence on Chinese society. Furthermore, in recent years this group has expanded rapidly overseas. One of the great controversies surrounding this group is whether the Church of Almighty God is part of orthodox Christianity.*

This paper, written originally in Chinese and translated into English here, analyzes the religious nature of the Church of Almighty God (CAG) and compares it with orthodox Christianity from four aspects: its doctrine, leadership, believers, and the church. This paper concludes that CAG is quite different from Christianity in these four main aspects and even contradicts Christianity in its core beliefs; therefore, CAG is not Christian.

The English translation is not a complete translation of the original Chinese paper and was provided to ChinaSource. Charts, lists, and some footnotes are not included in the English version. Also, unless noted with page numbers or website address, CAG quotations have not been verified.

“What is religion?” This is a seemingly simple question but in fact is an extremely complicated one. It can be said that there has never been a universally accepted answer to this question since the emergence of religion. The more we gain an understanding of various religions throughout history, the more difficult a situation we find ourselves in to reach a scientific definition that is suitable for all religions and at the same time reveals their essence.

Some scholars say that religion is a method to achieve ultimate transformation while others believe that religion can improve a person’s character. Cultural anthropologist Frazer believes that religion is a method to please the superhuman power and seek to reconcile with it. He says, “By religion, I mean to cater to or comfort the superhuman power that is considered to be able to guide and control nature and life process.” Austrian anthropologist Wilhelm Schmidt (1868-1954) also gave a relatively complete definition of religion: “Religion can be defined into two aspects: the subjective and the objective. Subjectively speaking, it refers to a person’s knowledge or feelings toward one or more supernatural forces with human characteristics. Based on this knowledge or feelings, the person then engages in communication with this force(s). Objectively speaking, religion is the synthesis of all the actions that express this subjective religion, such as prayer, sacrifices, sacraments, etiquette, practice, and ethical rules.”

William James (1842-1910), an American philosopher and psychologist, studied the nature and function of religion from personal religious experiences. He regarded personal religious experiences as the foundation and essence of religion. He also put forward his own definition of religion: “Therefore,

I now ask you to arbitrarily adopt my definition of religion, that is, the feelings, behaviors, and experiences that everyone has from the relation with any kind of objects that he considers sacred when he is lonely.”

None of the explanations mentioned above is universally accepted because they either lack universal validity applicable to all religions or are easily confused with other social and cultural phenomena. Therefore, Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), the founder of modern religious studies, not only lamented the difficulty of defining religion but also thought that it was impossible to define religion. He believed that what we could do was just to put forward some characteristics: “Since it is impossible to find an appropriate definition or exhaustive description for all that can be identified as religion, the only thing we can do is just to put forward some characteristics.”

On the question of what religion is, the academic community [in China] now generally accepts the “Four-Element Theory” of Mr. Lu Daji, who proposed that religion is a kind of social consciousness concerning a superhuman and supernatural power which leads to a believing and worshipping behavior, and it is a social and cultural system that integrates such consciousness and behavior and makes them standardized and institutionalized. In short, religion is the integration of four elements: religious thought, religious experiences or feelings, religious behavior, and religious organization or institution. Religion, as a whole, is a social and cultural system formed by a certain combination of these four elements. Therefore, with the four elements and a certain kind of structure of them, religion comes into being. Without any of these elements, it is not a religion. In other words, as long as it is a religion, there must be an integration of these four elements. Any partial composition or non-composition of these four elements does not constitute a religion.

The Four-Element Theory is our standard to distinguish religion from non-religion. We divide these elements into two categories, each of which is further divided into two parts. The first category is internal elements, including religious ideas (or thoughts) and religious experiences (or feelings); the second category is external ones, including religious behavior (or activity) and religious organization and institution. A relatively complete and formed religion is the synthesis of both internal and external elements. Religious idea and religious experience are two unified interdependent aspects of religious consciousness. Knowledge and feelings co-exist with each other. The feelings and knowledge of religious consciousness are bound to be expressed outwardly, which are reflected in religious belief and worship, and all these are gradually standardized into religious organizations and institutions. Therefore, the internal and external elements that constitute religion are two aspects of the same thing. Conceptually they are two but in essence they are integrated and mutually existing and restricted.

Academic communities have varying views on whether “cult” (*xiejiao*) in the Chinese context refers to religion. Some people think not. For example, Duan Dezhi of Wuhan University suggests that a *xiejiao* is not a religion; it refers to illegal organizations that carry out political activities in the name of religion. Some people think that it does refer to religion. For example, Dai Kangsheng thinks that *xiejiao* belongs to the new religious movement that is characterized with absolute leader worship and definite eschatological ideas. Still there are some other people who take a middle position. For example, Zhao Kuang thinks that *xiejiao* is “religious” in nature, but that it differs essentially from traditional religion while has a certain connection with traditional religions. Zhao suggests that a *xiejiao* group will steal

and utilize familiar items such as deity, doctrine, beliefs, and forms in traditional religions to establish the authority of its leader among its believers thereby developing and strengthening its power base. Since the whole process involves some religious characteristics, it can be regarded as the “religious nature” of a *xiejiao*. This is also what is confusing about a *mobaituanti* (lit. a worship group). Some scholars point out that using the name *mobaituanti*, instead of *xiejiao*, can better maintain the neutrality of academic research.

The Church of Almighty God (CAG, also known as Eastern Lightning, Practical God, and Seven Spirit Church) came into being in China in the early 1990s. It bears typical characteristics of Eastern mysticism and combines the theological and metaphysical characteristics of Western Christianity. At the same time, it also has strong destructive characteristics that are anti-social and anti-moral and has caused a broad and profound impact on Chinese society. In recent years it has even expanded rapidly overseas. Yan Kejia called CAG a typical indigenous *mobaituanti*. It originated from Christian religion but is essentially different from traditional Christian religion; it is obviously religious and beguiling, which is the reason for its rapid expansion in recent years. In the following, we will analyze the differences between CAG and Christian religion from the perspectives of doctrine, leadership, believers, and the church.

1. Doctrines

The “doctrine” of a *mobaituanti* is its spiritual pillar and “ideological resource.” Generally, the standard function of doctrine for any religious groups is to solidify and preserve traditions and to unify the beliefs of believers. The same principle applies to a *mobaituanti*. The “doctrine” of a *mobaituanti* is the “ideological resource” for its establishment, survival, and development. By promoting its “doctrine,” the *mobaituanti* attracts believers and gradually realizes the ideological control of them, causing the believers to develop an absolute sense of dependence and reverence toward the group. Moreover, a *mobaituanti* will stand on its own doctrinal position to “deny, belittle, or distort one or more basic theological beliefs of traditional religions, including denying the Bible and so on. It has an exclusive belief system and distorts the *parousia*.”

CAG’s doctrinal classic is their book, *The Word Appears in the Flesh*. This book contains 1,201,312 words and is divided into three parts. The first part, “Utterances of Christ in the Beginning,” contains the record of the talks by the Almighty God, totaling 120 articles, of which the first talk was published on February 11, 1991. This part is the speaking of the Holy Spirit to the churches during the transitional period, that is, from the end of the Age of Grace to the start of the Age of Kingdom. It is also the period during which the Holy Spirit publicly testifies the Son of Man to the churches. This is God’s initial work in the Age of Kingdom.

The second part, “God’s Words to the Entire Universe,” covers 47 utterances from February 20, 1992 to June 1, 1992. This part begins with “ending the status of the human servants and starting the new life as the people of God” and leads people into the second climax of God’s work, passing through several steps, such as the test of the lake of fire, the test of death, and the time of loving God. These steps completely expose the ugliness and true condition of people before God. The last discourse in this part ends with God breaking up with humanity and completing all the steps He took in His

incarnation to conquer the first group of humanity.

The third part, "The Words of the Son of Man Incarnate as He Walked in the Churches," is the words of the female Christ from the end of 1992 to 1997. Most of these are sermons given by the female Christ and a few documents written by herself. This part is divided into four sections. They believe that these are the words of the female Christ, so they present the words in different ways and from various angles, sometimes in an ironic way, sometimes in the form of direct teaching, sometimes in the form of examples, sometimes in the form of severe reprimands, sometimes talking to people from God's own perspective, sometimes speaking from a third party's perspective, and sometimes speaking from a human perspective. No matter from what angle she speaks, what she has presented is the essence of God, the truth, and what humanity needs.

The main doctrine of CAG is based on the so-called three-step work in six thousand years, which they think is God's whole plan for the entire universe. The six-thousand-year work can be divided into three periods, namely, the Age of Law, the Age of Grace, and the Age of Kingdom. In these three periods, God's work, purposes, and methods are all different. God also has different names, different dispositions, and even different genders in these three ages. Those who do not understand and believe in the work in these three ages will not receive salvation from God. Therefore, the work of three steps in six thousand years is the main doctrine of CAG from which its unique thoughts were developed concerning the Bible, God, Christology, salvation, eschatology, and the church.

In this aspect, Christianity is very different from CAG. In Christianity, the God that they believe in is immutable. Jehovah is immutable; and His righteousness, His love, His will, and His disposition will not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. There is no shadow of turning in Him. Moreover, God is the Master of history and has absolute sovereignty over time. Different "ages" are merely parts of the process of history and people's observation on history. God's work in each age is continuous and consistent. In the study of past human history, people have different views concerning dispensations; hence, one cannot make any generalization hastily. Take the pre-Millennium school as an example; they believe history is divided into six ages, namely, the age of creation, the age of conscience, the age of law, the age of the church, the age of millennium, and the age of perfection. It's impossible to limit God to mere ages, because in the eyes of God one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day.

On the other hand, positioned very differently from what Christianity believes about God, CAG denies the doctrine of the Trinity and insists that Jesus is not the Son of God. They say, "Jesus is the incarnation of God but not His Son in heaven, do you understand?" and "Jesus is just a man chosen by God on the earth. One cannot prove that he is the Son of the Spirit of God in heaven. He is just a man who is restricted by the flesh and does not have all the authority of the Spirit."

The following quotations taken from CAG show fully what they think of the Trinity.

"You have been too grievously infected by religious notions. You have accepted too deeply these conventional notions of religion, and this poison has seeped too deep within you. So too in this matter have you succumbed to this pernicious influence, for the Trinity simply does not exist. That is, the

Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit simply does not exist. These are all conventional notions of man, and the fallacious beliefs of man. Throughout many centuries, man has believed in this Trinity, conjured up by notions in the mind of a man, fabricated by man, and never before seen by man.” (note: *Selections from The Word Appears in the Flesh* p. 243)

“If any among you says that the Trinity indeed exists, then explain what exactly is this one God in three persons? What is the Holy Father? What is the Son? What is the Holy Spirit? Is not the Father the Spirit? Is not the substance of the Son also the Spirit? Was not the work of Jesus the work of the Holy Spirit? Was not the work of Jehovah at the time carried out by a Spirit the same as Jesus?” (p. 245)

“Let me tell you that, in truth, the Trinity does not exist anywhere in this universe. God has no Father and no Son, much less is there the concept of an instrument jointly used by the Father and the Son: the Holy Spirit. All of this is the greatest fallacy and simply does not exist in this world!” (p. 244)

“How many Spirits can God have? According to your explanation, the three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one; if so, there are three Spirits, but to have three Spirits means there are three Gods. This means that there is no one true God.” (p. 245)

“This concept of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is most absurd!” (p. 246)

(note: The English version of CAG quotations has not been verified against the original source.)

The explanation with regard to the Bible provided by CAG is also in conflict with Christianity. CAG thinks that the Bible is an outdated product, and now it has been replaced by the words of the female Christ. Moreover, they often quote the Bible while denying, slandering, disparaging, and even attacking it at the same time.

For example, CAG says, “So the word of life contained in the New Testament...is just a history book, a stack of yellowed pages. How can a stack of yellowed pages lead mankind into a new era?... Are they not a thing of the past? Are they not worthless today, then? So, I say to you, you must no longer put blind faith in yellowed pages—they are too old, they cannot lead you into new work, they will only be an encumbrance to you.” (note: from “Concerning the Bible (4),” p. 642, *Selection from The Word Appeared in the Flesh*.)

“Even many obsolete words of Jesus will pass away.” “For this reason I say that no matter how great a help the Bible was to man in the past, it is a hindrance to God’s newest work.” “The Bible is a great obstacle to man’s receiving of God’s work of renewing and God’s further expanding of his work of renewing.” “Those who believe in the Bible believe in rumors.” “Those who hold to the concepts of the Bible are the class enemies of God.”

Classics generally refer to the fundamental works based on which religions preach their doctrines; the classics are usually standards and authoritative works, especially those with great originality and foundation. They can stand the test of history. The following is a comparison between CAG’s classic *The Word Appears in the Flesh* and the Christian classic, the Bible.

At present, CAG has more than 50 books, with the content of *The Word Appears in the Flesh* (WAF) as its core doctrine and most other books being simple and repeated excerpts from WAF. Generally speaking, the contents of these books are vulgar in language, confusing in its logic, self-contradictory, and not justifiable. Below are more quotations to demonstrate this fact:

“I have said a hundred thousand words but you continue to behave badly. Why do you lie again and again? Beware that you may lose your life! If you provoke me to a point, I will kick you out without mercy. I do not care how you used to be, whether you were loyal or enthusiastic, how hard you worked for me, or how much money you gave me. I do not care. If you make me angry, I will throw you in the abyss and see who dares to defraud me. Remember! If I get angry, I will eliminate whoever it is immediately so as not to leave a trace of it for me to see again. If you resist, I will punish you right away. Have you kept everything I said in your memory? If you are wise, you must repent right away.”

“After listening to my words, everyone is afraid and trembling. What are you afraid of? I won't kill you! Or do you feel guilty? What you did behind my back was so frivolous and worthless. It has provoked my hatred to the extent I want to throw those not predestinated by me into the abyss, into smithereens. But I have my plan. I won't kill you now. After you finish your work for me, I will kick you away.”

“Those losers are barking like a dog. They know what the truth is but still deliberately resist it, rebellious! It seems that their fake god is now on the throne, so they are so arrogant. However, how many of them seek truth and follow justice? They are all animals like pigs and dogs, carrying a group of stinky flies in the dunghill. They think that their 'god' is the biggest king, but they are just a bunch of stinky flies relying on their disgusting 'god' to slander the existence of the real God. They are but small flies who think their 'god' is as powerful as a toothed whale, but the truth is that they are just dust and their 'parents' are filthy pigs and dogs a few million times larger than them. They don't know how low they are; instead they march around with the disgusting smell of their ugly 'god.' They use colorful clothes to cover their own filth, thereby threatening the existence of the real God.”

There are also many other vulgar statements in the book and many self-contradictory and logically confusing statements. The following is a brief list of examples. [Chart with list is in the original Chinese paper.]

2. Leadership

The leader of a *mobaituanti* sits at the top of its organization and is the creator and manipulator of its organizational structure and internal operational mechanism. Therefore, if we want to study the constitution of a group, we cannot avoid analyzing its leadership. The leader of a *mobaituanti* is usually charismatic; that is, he is extremely charming and has a great drawing power.

Max Weber once elaborated on this issue in detail. He thought that religious endowment varies from person to person. For example, a shaman, a wizard, or a medium may possess the ability of reaching ecstasy and second sight not commonly owned by everyone. Possessing such an ability is a kind of charisma. According to Weber, there are three main characteristics of charisma.

First, it is extraordinary. Charisma is fundamentally different from conventional and daily phenomena. Second, it is spontaneous. Charisma is spontaneous and often incompatible with the stable form of a current society. Charisma is often the root of social instability or innovation; Third, it is creative. Charisma can break through any routine at will and is sometimes the source of new social forms and social movements.

In a modern society, the charismatic leader of a *mobaituanti* has basically adapted to the modern living environment. In order to attract the masses more effectively, he may appear as a “spiritual advisor,” packaging himself with advanced science and technology and with modern fashion and cultural elements. Additionally, he may develop a thorough theory and system, which makes him more attractive and beguiling, as a means to control his believers. The charismatic leader of a *mobaituanti* often dresses himself up as the God who is the master over everything; by doing so he steals the name of God from traditional religions in order to expand his own belief base.

The leader of CAG is the female Christ. However, it is not completely clear who this female Christ is. At present, it can only be known from the self-introduction on CAG’s website:

“Christ was born into an ordinary family in northern China. From childhood, she had believed in God with all her heart. She gradually grew up as an ordinary person does. In 1989, just as the Holy Spirit was working on a large scale in the house church, Christ gave up her studies and formally entered the house church. At the time, Christ was fervent in heart and yearned to serve God and perform His duty. Two years later, Christ began to express words, writing down the words in her heart and giving them to the churches. Afterward, as Christ expressed more and more truths, people were attracted by Christ’s words, and hungered to read what she had expressed... Christ was accepted, known, and exalted by people and became the practical God venerated, loved, and esteemed by mankind. Christ is possessed of both normal humanity and full divinity. She can express the truth at any time and in any place and disclose the substance of mankind’s corruption. Her words and outlook are full of the truth and wisdom, just like the Lord Jesus. What Christ speaks and has is not learned from books but comes entirely from the divine substance he possesses. Christ was begotten from God. In her life people see her completely normal humanity. From her work and patience with mankind, people can see her divine substance and disposition that is intolerant of offense by man. Although, like the Lord Jesus, Christ has the weaknesses of humanity, she also has the substance of obedience to God’s Spirit. She is full of truth and wisdom, inspiring utter conviction in people in both their hearts and words. Christ is the truth, the way, and the life in name and in reality!”

“At the beginning of February 1991, someone in the church seemed to receive the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment and began to speak, testifying to the name of God and the coming of God. These words were sent out to the churches, and after reading them, everyone grew very excited, they were all overjoyed and believed that this surely was the enlightenment and works of the Holy Spirit. From then on, Christ began to speak...the utterances became more and more frequent. Everyone passed them around and felt extremely excited, meetings were full of enjoyment, and everyone was immersed in happiness. As Christ expressed more and more words, all people paid attention to enjoying God’s words, and their hearts were completely gripped by God’s words. And so, during the assemblies, they formally began to enjoy the present words of the Holy Spirit. At that time people had yet to realize that

God had been incarnated and this was the appearance of Christ. They only regarded Christ's expression as the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit received by an ordinary person, because in Christ's expression, she had not formally testified to God's incarnation. No one understood what the incarnation was all about and knew only that these words were the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they still treated Christ as an ordinary person. Only when Christ's utterances reached their peak did God begin to testify to God's incarnation, explaining the differences between the Holy Spirit's descent unto man and the Holy Spirit's work in man and disclosing the mystery of the Spirit's realization in the flesh. Only then did people know that this ordinary person who lived among them and expressed the words to shepherd and supply the churches was God incarnate, Christ, and God who had appeared." (note: from "A brief introduction about the background" www.holyspiritspeaks.org)

From the above information, we can know the basic situation of this female Christ. She is an ordinary girl born in northern China and joined a house church in 1989. In 1991, she was moved by the Holy Spirit and began to speak many different words. In June 2001, a Chinese man who claimed to be the founder of "Eastern Lightning" applied for political asylum in New York City, USA, on the grounds of "escaping from religious persecution". His name was Zhao Weishan; and Eastern Lightning was the original name of CAG. In 1993, Zhao Weishan married Yang Xiangbin, and in 1995, they gave birth to their son Zhao Ming. Based on this, it is speculated that Yang Xiangbin is the female Christ of CAG and Zhao Weishan is the mastermind. If you want to know the origin and development of CAG, please refer to my book: *The Revelation of a Mobaituanti—the Church of Almighty God*.

Concerning the female Christ, Yang Xiangbin, she was born on November 18, 1973 in Xiping Village, Xiping Town, Datong county, Datong City, Shanxi Province. She has a nickname, Jiu-jiu, and a given spiritual name, Quancheng (lit. all sincerity). They said that the female Christ fulfilled the prophecy of the prophets; she was the queen of the south that came from where the sun rises and from the land of the East (that is, China). This is how they introduce her:

"Today, two thousand years later, God is incarnated again in the East of the world (China). Her work is to end the old Age of Grace and start a new Age of Kingdom; Anyone who believes that 'the female Christ' is the Almighty God will be worked on by her to become an overcomer and enter the Age of Kingdom."

"When Jesus first came, he was male, but this time it is a female. God is incarnated twice and this is the last time. He comes to express His work. If the God incarnate does not work and let the work be seen this time, people would always think that God is a male, not a female."

"This is my second time to work in the flesh. In the final two steps, people are no longer in contact with the invisible and intangible Spirit but with a person in whom the Spirit is realized. Therefore, in people's eyes, I am just a human being and there is no trace of God. Moreover, the God that people see is not only male but also female, which is most surprising and puzzling."

"This time I come here not to heal diseases, cast out demons, perform miracles, preach the gospel of repentance, or to save people. Jesus has done that, and God does not repeat. The God of present days does not show signs or wonders, neither does He heal diseases or cast out demons. The work Jesus

did when he came represented a part of God and this time God comes to do this part of the work because God doesn't repeat his work. He is the God that is always new and never old."

"By speaking God has changed the way he works. This is the main work of God, to erase the image of Jesus in people's hearts. People think that God comes to heal diseases, cast out demons, perform miracles, and give people material blessings. God wants to remove all these things from people's concepts so that they may know the real and normal God and that the status of Jesus may be erased in people's hearts while God's new image may occupy them."

At the same time, CAG also threatens their believers, saying: "Those who only believe in Jesus and consistently resist the female Christ as well as the prophets and apostles of all ages are sons of Satan and cannot enjoy the blessings of the kingdom. After they die, they will be reincarnated again and serve God perpetually."

"You should not pass judgment on God, nor casually discuss matters related to God. You should do as man ought to do, and speak as man ought to speak, and must not overstep your limits nor transgress your boundaries. Guard your own tongue and be careful of your own footsteps. All this will present you from doing anything that offends God's disposition." (note: from "The Ten Administrative Decrees," *Selections from the Word Appears in the Flesh* p. 675)

The table below provides a comparison between the female Christ of the CAG and Jesus Christ in Christianity: [Note: table is in the original Chinese paper.]

3. Believers

The leader of a *mobaituanti* is the absolute power center, and surrounding this center is a large number of obsessed believers. Believers are the basic constituents of a *mobaituanti*. If a *mobaituanti* fails to attract a large number of devoted believers, no matter how "powerful" the leader may be, people will think it's just some nonsense from him and his preaching will not pose a threat to society. Therefore, the study of a *mobaituanti* has always focused on its believers' psychology and motivation, their basic types, and the meeting mechanism.

Pepe Rodriguez, a Spanish anti-cult expert, said: "The inducement that determines a person to be finally convinced by a certain sect—to be exact, a cult — is not a specific situation, but the result of the joint action of many factors with different origins." Moreover, after joining a cult, people's behavioral characteristics will change greatly, and these characteristics are determined by the doctrines."

According to Wu Fan's research, by following some CAG members over a long period of time, he found that the doctrine promoted by CAG caters especially to the needs of vulnerable and paranoid groups in society. Wu believes that the groups targeted by CAG have the characteristics of "six more": more women, more people aged 30 to 60, more people with low education level, more low-income groups, more people with disharmony in their family lives, and more people with paranoid personality. Wu's description of CAG believers happens to match those who left their families to join CAG. Some of these families formed a civilian alliance against CAG.

“Anti-Almighty God Alliance” is a non-government run website voluntarily organized by the families and relatives of the victims of CAG. The website keeps a national database that assembles information of all the missing persons who were believed to have joined CAG; and the website also assists the families to search for the missing members. According to the information published in the search notice part of the website, from 2014 to 2018, over 90% of the believers who left home were women with low educational background in the age range of 30 to 60.

In recent years, this author has interviewed some believers who broke away from CAG. Most of them reported that they joined the group when their family or social relationship was strained. Many admitted that they were deceived when they first joined it, and most of them left because they woke up or because they were abandoned by CAG because of their poor health. Most of them changed a great deal after they joined CAG; their behavior became secretive and they became less positive. They had less contact with the outside world except with a few people within the group. They did not disclose their real names and addresses, unwilling to even show their own pictures. Their attitude towards family and society became negative; they even cursed unbelieving family members and abandoned their own family, which brought great hardship to their family members.

These characteristics are quite different from the behavior of orthodox Christian believers, which are summarized and compared in the following table: [Note: table is in the original Chinese paper.]

Later, a CAG doctrinal document was uncovered, and it sheds light on the abnormal behavior of its believers.

“There is no relationship between a believing husband and an unbelieving wife, and there is no relationship between believing children and unbelieving parents; these two types of people are completely incompatible. Prior to entering into rest, one has physical relatives, but once one has entered into rest, one will no longer have any physical relatives to speak of. Those who do their duty are enemies of those who do not; those who love God and those who hate Him are in opposition to one another. Those who will enter into rest and those who will have been destroyed are two incompatible types of creatures. Creatures that fulfill their duties will be able to survive, while those that do not fulfill their duties will be objects of destruction; what is more, this shall last through eternity. Do you love your husband in order to fulfill your duty as a created being? Do you love your wife in order to fulfill your duty as a created being? Are you dutiful to your unbelieving parents in order to fulfill your duty as a created being? Is the human view on believing in God right or wrong? Why do you believe in God? What do you wish to gain? How do you love God? Those who cannot fulfill their duties as created beings, and who cannot make an all-out effort, will become objects of destruction. There are physical relationships that exist between the people of today, as well as associations by blood, but in the future, these will all be shattered. Believers and unbelievers are not compatible; rather, they are opposed to one another. Those in rest will believe that there is a God and will submit to God, whereas those who are disobedient to God will all have been destroyed. Families will no longer exist upon earth; how could there be parents or children or spousal relationships? The very incompatibility of belief and unbelief will have utterly severed such physical relationships!” (note: from “God and Man Will Enter into Rest Together” pp. 517–518, *Selections from The Word Appears in the Flesh*)

Doctrines like these can be found in CAG's books. They caused the believers not only to become cold and hostile to their family but also to give up all their material possessions, their time, and even their own lives to "perform their duties" and "offer up love" to CAG.

CAG believers were told, "If you love, then you will not deceive, complain, betray, rebel, exact, or seek to gain something or to gain a certain amount. If you love, then you will gladly dedicate yourself, will gladly suffer hardship, you will be compatible with Me, you will forsake all that you have for Me, you will give up your family, your future, your youth, and your marriage. If not, your love would not be love at all, but deceit and betrayal! What kind of love is yours? Is it a true love? Or false? How much have you forsaken? How much have you offered up? How much love have I received from you? ...I admonish you: Those I call to Me are not the ones who have never been corrupted; rather, those I choose are the ones who truly love Me. Therefore, you must be vigilant in your words and deeds, and examine your intentions and thoughts so that they do not cross the line. At the time of the last days, do your utmost to offer up your love before Me, lest My wrath never depart from you!" (note: from "Many Are Called but Few Are Chosen," *Selections from the Word Appears in the Flesh*, p. 46)

CAG also requires believers to obey absolutely: "In work and matters of the church, apart from obeying God, in everything you should follow the instructions of the man who is used by the Holy Spirit. Even the slightest infraction is unacceptable. You must be absolute in your compliance and must not analyze right or wrong; what is right or wrong has nothing to do with you. You must only concern yourself with total obedience." (note: from "The Ten Administrative Decrees", p. 675, *Selections from the Word Appears in the Flesh*)

"If people can truly see clearly the right path of human life, as well as the purpose of God's management of mankind, they would not hold their individual future and destiny as a treasure in their heart. They then would no longer be interested in serving their parents, who are worse than pigs and dogs." (note: from "The Purpose of Managing Mankind," www.holyspiritspeaks.org)

"If anyone disobeys me, he will be punished and dealt with. I know every one of you thoroughly. Do you think I don't know what to do or say? Mind your own business or else my hand will eliminate you and you will suffer a loss. My administration spares no one. Do you understand? All the above are part of my administration. Since the day I told you, if anyone offends my administration, he will be punished. You didn't understand it before so now I will inform you (my administration will be implemented from the date of announcement, and people's punishment will vary accordingly.) I will do what I say and I'm in control of everything. Anyone who doubts will be killed immediately without any hesitation, leaving no trace of his existence and thus removing the anguish in my heart. (This is to prove that whoever gets killed is not a member of my kingdom but a descendant of Satan)."

Therefore, many believers, after joining CAG, have to fill out various forms of pledges, even death vows, such that, even long after they break away from CAG, they still bear heavy, mental shackles in the depth of their souls. The following are examples of different pledges, some containing curses, by the believers. [Note: Examples are in the original Chinese paper.]

4. The Church

CAG condemns Christianity and does not think CAG is a part of Christianity either. Here are some of their beliefs concerning the church:

“Now is not the time to build up the church but the time to accomplish the building of the kingdom.”
“There is no need to receive the Holy Communion or be baptized because the door of grace has long been closed and you cannot meet the demands of the God of last days no matter how well you behave or how much you have done. You should know that God’s demands on mankind are constantly changing with times.”

“I hate your co-workers’ meetings and large or small meetings. I have never been interested in them. The principle of my work is that I am not willing to speak in these meetings... I do not like seeing you seated orderly together in a meeting, not because your arrangement is bad or you are too lowly, but because I dislike your way of living and I cannot adjust to your kind of living.”

Therefore, CAG not only has no liturgies such as baptism and Holy Communion but also has no formal sermons, both of which are important symbols of a traditional Christian church. Their meetings are very hidden, usually with three to five people, not exceeding seven, and the meeting location also changes regularly. There is a strict internal organization and division of labor, and a member only comes in contact with a very small number of people immediately above or below her. Information exchange between them is passed on by word of mouth or through a slip of paper. In the meetings, they mainly study the latest messages and receive work assignments from the upper rank (which is updated every half a month and can be downloaded from the website). They don’t use the Bible or sing hymns, neither do they pray to the Lord Jesus. At the same time, they think that only CAG is the church in Philadelphia and other churches should be eliminated.

With regard to the church in Philadelphia, CAG says, “You’ve made complete all churches, the Philadelphia church. Your six-thousand-year plan is realized. The saints humbly obey in front of you, connected in spirit, and with each other in love, connected to the source, the fountain of life. The living water runs endlessly, washing away and purging the filth that plagues the church, once again cleansing your temple. We let God reign in our spirits, walking with Him, gaining transcendence, overcoming the world, our spirits fly free. It’s the outcome of Almighty God being King. So, cooperate with God, serve in coordination, and become one to satisfy God’s will. Hasten to become a holy spirit body, trample on Satan and end its destiny!” (note: see “We Have Been Caught up before the Throne” from www.holyspiritspeaks.org)

CAG opposes Paul and his epistles in the Bible, thinking that Paul has been punished by God. This is quite different from the position traditional Christian churches hold, who highly respect Paul’s writings. CAG says, the apostle Paul’s “one imperfection was that, because of his talents, he would often be glib and boastful...He was one of those who do not know my words, and my place in his heart had already vanished. Such people directly oppose my divinity, and are struck down by me, and only bow down and confess their sins at the very end. Hence, after I had utilized his strong points—which is to say, after he had worked for me for a period of time—he once more fell into his old ways, and although he did not disobey my words directly, he disobeyed my inner guidance and enlightenment, and thus all that he had done in the past was futile; in other words, the crown of glory he spoke of had become

empty words, a product of his own imagination, for even today he is still subjected to my judgment within the captivity of my bonds.” (note: from “The Fourth Utterance,” *Selections from the Word Appears in the Flesh*, p. 680)

“If the believers “do not try their best to deal with themselves and discipline their body, they will become the object of my rejection and be sent to hell, just like Paul who was directly punished by me and will never be released.”

In addition, CAG’s attitude towards other religious groups and toward the government is completely different from that of traditional Christian churches. The following is the comparison between CAG and the Christian Church: [Note: The comparison is in the original Chinese paper.]

5. Conclusion

From the above analysis and comparison in the doctrines, leadership, believers, and the church between CAG and traditional Christian churches, we can see that CAG appears to be Christian but is essentially different. They deny the Trinity and think that the Bible is obsolete; and their behavior is quite different from that of traditional Christians, even being hostile to and attacking traditional Christianity. They run counter to Christianity in the central tenets.

First, they do not recognize the Trinity. They only recognize the fictional female Christ that they manufactured. Second, they deny the Bible, saying that it is out of date. They only read their own materials, such as *The Word Appears in the Flesh*. Third, they have no initiation ceremony; believers can join in the service without being baptized. Fourth, they do not have important Christian worship services such as the communion or the bread-breaking meeting. Fifth, they do not pray to the Lord Jesus; they only pray to the Almighty God, the self-recognized female Christ.

All of these are related to the central tenets of Christianity. CAG not only does not ascribe to them but even goes against them. For this reason the Church of Almighty God is not Christianity.

As they themselves claim: “Christianity, Catholicism, and Orthodox Church were all begotten by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. The Church of Almighty God is created by the judging work of the incarnate Almighty God of the last days... Therefore, the Church of Almighty God definitely does not belong to any Christian sect. The two are essentially different.”

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