

## Shepherd's Chapel

By Jason Barker<sup>1</sup>

---

**Founder:** Arnold Murray

**Location:** Gravette, AR

**Official Publication:** *The Shepherd's Chapel*, a daily television program broadcast on satellite and commercial stations throughout North America. Also publishes a monthly newsletter.

**Organization Structure:** Murray is pastor of Shepherd's Chapel Church in Gravette, and host of the television program. A number of student followers have created, through the internet, independent organizations referring to themselves as "Shepherd's Chapel Bible Students."

**Unique Terms:** Kenites, Serpent Seed.

### HISTORY

---

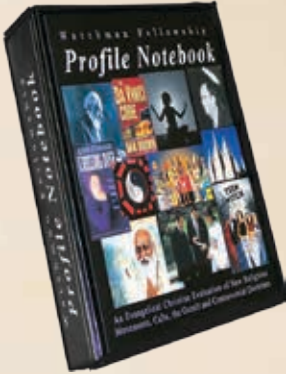
The history of Arnold Murray and the Shepherd's Chapel is a closely guarded secret. Diakon II, a non-denominational group that has criticized Murray's teachings, comments, "Information about Arnold Murray & the 'Shepherd's [sic] Chapel' does seem a bit scarce, considering how many Television hours he has long requisitioned."<sup>2</sup> Requests for information from Shepherd's Chapel resulted, for this author, in Chapel staff refusing to send any information beyond an audiotape by Murray entitled "The Mark of the Beast." Requests for an interview by a reporter from the *Sacramento (CA) News & Review* in 1989 were invariably refused with the excuse that Murray was "unavailable for comment."<sup>3</sup>

One possible reason for Murray's reticence to release biographical or historical information is the apparent misinformation circulated by the Shepherd's Chapel concerning Murray's alleged doctorate. Evangelical apologist William Alnor asserts that Murray "Falsely claims to have a doctorate degree from a properly accredited university or seminary."<sup>4</sup> This accusation is well substantiated by the research of B.J. Oropeza in 1991.

Oropeza notes that Murray claimed to receive a doctorate from an individual named Roy Gillespie, after writing a dissertation on the book of Daniel.<sup>5</sup> No evidence of such a dissertation was found in The National Union Catalog or through UMI Microfilms (the primary source for copies of theses and dissertations).<sup>6</sup> The claim of a receptionist for Shepherd's Chapel (an admittedly dubious source for official statements) that Murray's dissertation was unavailable because it was being "revised"<sup>7</sup> is additionally problematic: dissertations are not revised after being accepted by the author's dissertation committee and the office of graduate studies at the conferring institution.

Another receptionist [it is important to note that higher-level officials at Shepherd's Chapel will not reveal any information about the organization; office workers are thus frequently the only source of information concerning Shepherd's Chapel] told countercult researcher Tony Pierce that Murray had attended Biola University, a Christian institution in Los Angeles. Biola officials note, however, that there is no record of anyone named Arnold Murray having attended the school.<sup>8</sup>

# THE BEST RESOURCE COLLECTION ON CULTS AND RELIGIONS



The *Watchman Fellowship Profile Notebook* provides you with an extensive personal library of information about cults, new and alternative religions, world religions, and religious leaders. You will have at your fingertips over twenty years of research to answer your questions, strengthen your faith, and improve your witness to others.

- Over 100 Profiles
- Over 400 pages of information
- The history and primary teachings of each group
- A Christian response to deepen your faith and enhance your outreach



[CLICK HERE TO ORDER YOUR COPY OF THE WATCHMAN FELLOWSHIP PROFILE NOTEBOOK](#)



Be sure to also order your [free subscription to the Watchman Fellowship Profile](#). Several times each year you will receive a new, four-page Profile that you can add to your Profile Notebook, as well as the latest news from Watchman Fellowship. [Click here to order your free subscription!](#)



## DOCTRINES

---

Murray teaches numerous doctrines that are contrary to biblical Christianity, such as his denial of the Trinity, advocating British Israelism and the Serpent Seed doctrine. Murray's false teachings motivated the Jesus People Information Center to proclaim, "He is not competent to teach kindergarten in a real Christian church."<sup>9</sup>

**Trinity:** Murray and his followers deny the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, that one God exists eternally in three Persons. They instead teach modalism, the concept that the monotheistic God is a single person who acts through three different offices.<sup>10</sup> Murray voices his adherence to this teaching when he says that God "gots (sic) three offices he serves."<sup>11</sup> He elaborates:

You have these yo-yo's that will say, 'Well, I want you to think like (sic) of water and ice' and so on, various gases or so forth, or then they'll say, 'I want you to think of a 200 watt bulb, and a 150 watt bulb, and a 50 watt bulb.' Well, they're all the same wattage, friend. So why not just simplify it instead of playing stupid games, and understand that there are three offices of the Godhead. Like this little lady said. She said, 'To my husband I am a wife, to my children I am a mother, that's my office. To hundreds of third graders I am their teacher and have been down through the years. That's a different office; none of them the same, but I'm still the same person.' I like that. It's simple and to the point.<sup>12</sup>

Notice the implication of the example quoted by Murray. Just as the "little lady" is one woman who performs different functions in her roles as wife, mother, and teacher, so God is a single person who performs different functions and is perceived in different ways in his roles as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Murray clarifies his conflation of deity when he states, "[Christ's] spirit is holy and he is the Holy Spirit."<sup>13</sup> Since Murray does not believe that Jesus Christ is a Person distinct from the other members of the Trinity, he cannot justifiably claim to believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. Oropeza accurately observes that it is thus inconsistent for Murray to promote such a teaching and to also say, "A wise man never discusses the Trinity."<sup>14</sup>

**Preexistence of Humanity:** Murray and his followers believe that humans existed prior to living on earth. Murray teaches, in regard to Genesis 1:26, that God "spoke to the Elohim, meaning God and his children, let us make that man in our image, which is to say make it look in likeness that we are. Do you appear as your soul appeared in the world that was...I told you, that God said, 'In our image, our likeness,' the Elohim were standing there, they were from before."<sup>15</sup> He clarifies, "We were always with [God] until you were born into this earth."<sup>16</sup>

This concept requires further examination. Much like The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Murray and his followers believe that humans participated, prior to their mortal existence on this earth, in the rebellion in heaven described in Revelation 12:7-8. Those good individuals who fought on the side of Michael are those who, according to Ephesians 1:4 says, were "chosen...before the foundations of this world;" these individuals were predestined to salvation, and thus were not cursed with a free will.<sup>17</sup> Those who fought on the side of Satan, however, received a free will with which to choose or reject God in this life.<sup>18</sup> According to a student of Murray, 95 percent of those who fought for Satan [which, because they are not followers of Arnold Murray, includes such individuals as this author and most readers of this *Profile*] will continue to worship Satan in this life.<sup>19</sup>

**Christian Identity:** Just as the doctrine of the preexistence is integrally related in Mormon theology with racism,<sup>20</sup> so the doctrine of the preexistence is used in Shepherd's Chapel theology as a foundation for racist opposition to ethnic Jews. Murray's doctrine, which is similar to the Christian Identity movement, contends that caucasians of Anglo-Saxon, northern European descent who are followers of Murray are the ten lost tribes of

Israel, and that the Jews are descendents of the offspring of Satan and Eve. The remainder of this section will analyze the various components of the racist ideology of the Shepherd's Chapel.

*Serpent Seed*: A follower of Murray who writes under the pseudonym "Bruiser" clearly summarizes the Serpent Seed doctrine proclaimed by Murray and his students:

The serpent seed doctrine consists of the belief, that satan [sic] (personified as a serpent) inseminated Eve, with more than knowledge of good and evil. That his insemination of her was spiritual and physical. That the twins she carried to term were fathered by two different beings. That Abel, was sired by Adam, and Cain was sired by satan [sic]. That Cain's progeny continued, and associated at various times, with the children of Adam throughout history. That Cain's progeny infiltrated and mingled in with the Israelites, and garnered high positions in leadership and in religious service. That the damning words of our Lord concerning the children of satan [sic], His parable of the tares, and the repeated mention of the synagogue of satan [sic], point to more than a "spiritual" allegory. That the lineage of satan [sic] was, and is, alive and well among the children of Israel, of whom at present consist of both the Jewish and Christian peoples, whether by lineage or adoption.<sup>21</sup>

Note that not only do Murray's students believe that Jews are physically the children of Satan, but they also believe that people can become children of Satan through adoption into a Jewish or Christian family, or through conversion into these religions. Murray states the importance of this teaching for his followers: "Of what use is this knowledge to us? Because as Satan seduced Eve physically to accomplish an earthly impregnation he strives daily to spiritually impregnate those Children of God who know His truth."<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, this author first learned about Bruiser's essay from a student of Murray who advised that he read this as evidence that Murray and his followers DO NOT teach that the Jews are children of Satan.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, as in many false Christian groups, many individuals claim to be students of Murray without actually paying attention to his heretical teachings.

*British Israelism*: Murray's British Israelite theology is somewhat different from standard British Israelism. Murray teaches, as do most British Israelites, that the people of Anglo-Saxon descent are the physical descendents of "the same tribes [i.e., the northern ten tribes of Israel] that later went north and populated Europe and North America."<sup>24</sup> Contrary to some of these teachers, however, Murray traces the different races to Adamic creation in the book of Genesis. He claims that the British Israelites were the Adam created in Genesis 2, while the other, inferior races were the first Adam created in Genesis 1.<sup>25</sup>

*Kenites*: The Kenites are the direct physical descendents of Satan and Eve, through Cain (the dual lineage of divine and human makes them "hybrids"<sup>26</sup>). The Kenites are alive today, faithfully serving their father the Devil.<sup>27</sup>

Murray is surprisingly open about the Jewish identity of the Kenites. He claims, "Now who stands in Jerusalem today...the sons of Cain, or those who will not accept Jesus Christ...the Kenites, that founded a new nation starting in 1948."<sup>28</sup> Oropeza notes that Murray calls the Kenites "scum" and makes the stereotypical racial allusion to the Jewish businessperson when he claims, "If you want to get a Kenite upset, bother his money table."<sup>29</sup>

**Annihilationism**: Much like the Jehovah's Witnesses, Murray and his followers do not believe that individuals will suffer eternally in hell. Instead, Shepherd's Chapel teaches that the souls of unbelievers will be annihilated in the lake of Gehenna. Murray states, "We know man can kill our earthly bodies, but only our Father in heaven has the power to wipe out the existence of the soul...God's emotions are so much greater than you can even imagine, and to roast one of his own children day and night would be something only Satan would conceive of."<sup>30</sup>

**False Prophecy:** Murray prophesied that the Antichrist would appear by 1981: "Lucifer was taken to the pit...Know from the 2nd chapter of 2 Thessalonians that he shall soon return. The book of Daniel very clearly states that it shall happen before the year 1981, if you have any understanding at all of the wisdom of the elect in the last days."<sup>31</sup> The prophecy was such a notable failure that even the Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance note that Murray, an anti-Trinitarian adherent to Christian Identity, made this failed prophecy.<sup>32</sup>

## BIBLICAL RESPONSE

The Bible refutes the heresy of modalism by teaching that there is a distinction between the Persons in the Godhead (Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

The idea of the creation of two Adams is invalid. Genesis 1:1-2:23 focuses on the development of heaven and earth, while Genesis 2:4-4:26 focuses on the development of man.<sup>33</sup>

There is no distinction between the races by God (Galatians 3:28).

The Bible clearly shows that hell is a place of eternal torment (Matthew 23:33, 25:41, 45; Revelation 20:14).

Giving a false prophecy invalidates an individual as a Christian teacher (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Vital Christology Issues*, edited by Roy B. Zuck, Kregel. Essays by some of the best Evangelical scholars cover the whole range of biblical discourse on the Savior. Articles cover the preexistence of Christ and the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament. There is a thorough discussion of Gospel and Pauline revelations, as well as Jesus in Revelation. 171 pages.

*The Forgotten Trinity*, by James R. White, Bethany House. A concise, understandable explanation of the existence and meaning of the Trinity. Shows how belief in the Trinity is essential for Christian life and worship. 223 pages.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The author is indebted to the research in B. J. Oropeza, "Arnold Murray and the Shepherd's Chapel," *Christian Research Institute International*, DM-600 (1991).
- <sup>2</sup> "Re: 'Shepherd's Chapel Bible Study' and Arnold Murray," [http://x22.deja.com/=dnc/\[ST\\_rn=ps\]/getdoc.xp?AN=445713208&CONT\\_EXT=927645687.15466518&hitnum=11](http://x22.deja.com/=dnc/[ST_rn=ps]/getdoc.xp?AN=445713208&CONT_EXT=927645687.15466518&hitnum=11) (accessed 1999).
- <sup>3</sup> Melinda Welsh, "The Proof is in the Preaching: Local TV Programming Viewed as Neo-Nazi," *Sacramento News and Review*, 15 June 1989, 21.
- <sup>4</sup> William Alnor, "The Cultic Views of Arnold Murray and the Shepherd's Chapel," *The Christian Sentinel*, (1994) <http://www.cultlink.com/murray.html> (accessed 1999).
- <sup>5</sup> Oropeza, 5.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> "Editor Responds," *Jesus People Information Center*, n.d., 3.
- <sup>10</sup> Many modalists, also called dynamic monarchians or Sabellians, believe that God revealed Himself as the creator and lawgiver through the "office" of Father, as the redeemer through the office of Son, and as the source of grace through the office of Spirit. See Jason Barker, "Heresies: Then and Now," *The Watchman Expositor*, 16.1 (1999), 10.
- <sup>11</sup> The Shepherd's Chapel, broadcast May 14, 1991.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., June 4, 1991.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., May 8, 1991. Emphasis added.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., May 15, 1991.
- <sup>15</sup> Arnold Murray, Tape #146.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., Tape #436.
- <sup>17</sup> Joseph Lalibert, "Lecture Five: Firstfruits," <http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/lalibert/john316/lec005.html> (accessed 1999).
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>19</sup> Joseph Lalibert, "Lecture 20: Man's Nature and Divine Nature," <http://www3.sk.sympatico.ca/lalibert/john316/lec020.html> (accessed 1999).
- <sup>20</sup> See numerous articles by Timothy Oliver in *The Watchman Expositor*, 15.3 (1998).
- <sup>21</sup> Bruiser & Company, "The Serpent Seed Doctrine," <http://www.angelfire.com/az/rainbowbridge/serpent.html> (accessed 1999).
- <sup>22</sup> Arnold Murray, Newsletter #126, (1989).
- <sup>23</sup> Linda Kaminski, e-mail to author, 15 May 1999.
- <sup>24</sup> Arnold Murray, Newsletter #148, (1991).
- <sup>25</sup> Arnold Murray, Tape #146.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>27</sup> See "Our Statement of Faith," The Shepherd's Chapel, n.d.
- <sup>28</sup> Commentary in *The Shepherd's Bible*, Gravette, Ar: Shepherd's Chapel, 1979.
- <sup>29</sup> Oropeza, 2. See Arnold Murray, Tape #445.
- <sup>30</sup> Arnold Murray, Newsletter#151, (1991).
- <sup>31</sup> Arnold Murray, Seed of the Serpent [audiotape], 1979 version.
- <sup>32</sup> "The millennium, and 73 failed end-of-the-world predictions," [http://www.religioustolerance.org/end\\_wrlld.htm#past](http://www.religioustolerance.org/end_wrlld.htm#past) (accessed 1999).
- <sup>33</sup> See Oropeza, 2.



**Profile** is a regular publication of Watchman Fellowship, Inc. Readers are encouraged to begin their own religious research notebooks using these articles. Profiles are published by Watchman Fellowship approximately 6 times per year, covering subjects such as new religious movements, counterfeit Christianity, the occult, New Age Spirituality, and related doctrines and practices. Complete Profile Notebooks containing all Profiles published to date are available. Please contact Watchman Fellowship for current pricing and availability. All rights reserved © 1999.