

Former Churchgoers Have Found Alternative From Page 3

the sons and daughters of kings and queens from Ethiopia. You are born into it (the Rastafarian religion) rather than joining it. It's just a matter of acknowledging it."

The Rastafarian belief is a native African religion that was named after the Rasta Fari, as the late Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia was titled. Selassie, who was crowned emperor in 1930, is considered the Rasta prophet.

The religion has no established leaders or place of worship and emphasizes liberation for black people, whom it considers the lost African tribe of Juda, and a return to Africa.

An important part of the religion is the smoking of the Ganja, or marijuana plant, and wearing the the hair in a braided style called dread locks.

Many Rasta beliefs are found in the Bible's Old Testament and in the Book of Revelations. The Rastafarian religion was introduced in America and in Europe through the popularity of the late Bob Marley's reggae music.

How are these religions accepted by the Christian faith, which dominates the city's religious community?

"I think there are several reactions," Muslim Abdul-Fattah says, "anywhere from (calling Muslims the) Anti-Christ to an attitude of tolerance." But he adds that once many people become involved with the Muslim community, they appreciate its presence.

Baptist ministers offer differing opinions on the relationship that exists between Christians and other religious communities.

"We have no complications here where religion is concerned," says the Rev. J. Ray Butler, pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church.

Butler says that the Christian church works with other groups despite differences in beliefs.

The Rev. Donald Stowe, pastor of Second Calvary Baptist Church, says he is not aware of the alternative religions in the city. "I haven't worked with any of them," he says. "I am not aware of the various number of religions that we have locally."

The Rev. Willie Wilson, pastor of First Calvary Baptist Church, offers a different perspective.

"I don't work with them. I don't believe what they believe. I don't go along with certain things they believe, and this is just my personal belief," he says.

Why do some members leave the Christian church for other religions and how do they feel about Christianity? Some say they didn't understand the Christian faith and didn't approve of the effects it has on black people, but they add that there are some aspects of the Christian faith they accept.

Abdul-Fattah says he developed a greater appreciation and better understanding of Christianity after he became a Muslim and that there are many similarities in the two faiths.

But he says that many Christians, "especially from the

black community, have very little knowledge of the history of the development of Christianity from the time of Jesus Christ."

Abdul-Fattah says there is an almost "slavish" clinging to the Christian beliefs among black people, without actually studying the Scriptures and putting them into their proper context.

"Many Christians from the black community don't really extend themselves enough to sometimes listen or allow themselves to be exposed to any other interpretation other than what the minister gives them," he says.

Abdul-Fattah says that many blacks are drawn to the Muslim faith, which has approximately 3.5 million members nationwide, because it is against oppression and injustice.

Shakir, who works with the American Muslim Mission's Committee to Remove All Racial Images from the Divine, says the Christian faith propagates racism and the superiority of white people. "They portray anything divine as Caucasian," he says.

But he, too, says there are similarities in the Muslim and Christian basic religious beliefs as interpreted in the Bible and in the Koran, the Muslim holy book, except their differing opinion of Jesus Christ.

In Christianity, he is viewed as the son of God. In Islam, he is seen as a prophet of God.

Ms. Johnson says her Christian friends agree with and accept many of the concepts and beliefs of the Baha'i faith, but she adds that there is some difference of opinion.

"Many Christians like our principles until it comes to Jesus," says Ms. Johnson. "They claim that he is the only one. In the Baha'i faith, we accept and respect all the prophets and we don't believe there are different religions. We believe there is only one religion and that's God's religion."

Jackson says she decided to join the U-U faith came when she realized she had been trying to accept certain Christian religious teachings that she no longer approved of nor wanted to live by.

"It suddenly dawned on me that I had spent all this time trying to conform to the faith and I was unhappy with it," she says. "I found it pleasing that I didn't have to change my whole way of thinking (to be a U-U)."

But Jackson says she does not disapprove of Christianity. "People have the right to believe in what's important to them," she says, "whatever fits their lives."

Staff writers Robin Adams and Edward Hill Jr. also contributed to this article.

Morris-White Couple To Marry

Mrs. Renner Morris announces the engagement of her daughter, Marilyn Oglesby to Robert L. White, son of Ms. Maire W. Rice and the late Robert Rice. The wedding is planned

for June 18, at 2:30 p.m. at Second Calvary Baptist Church. The Rev. Donald L. Stowe will officiate.

The bride, who is the daughter of Mrs. Morris and the late Robert Morris, is a graduate of North Forsyth Senior High School and is employed by Service Systems of North State Supply Co.

to the public. Dorothy Sprinkle is deputy of the district, which includes 15 chapters in Forsyth, Yadkin, Davie, Surry, Iredell and Rowan counties.

The groom, a graduate of West Forsyth Senior High School, attended Guilford Technical Institute and is employed at North Carolina Baptist Hospital.

Eastern Stars Sponsor Tea

The 11th-District Order of Eastern Star, Prince Hall affiliated, will sponsor its annual program and tea beginning at 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 3, at the Masonic Temple at 1025 E. 14th St.

The program will be held in the Chapel at the Temple at 4 p.m., and the tea will

be in the dining area following the program.

Ester B. Huntley of Meridian Chapter No. 308 will be the featured speaker for the program. Elizabeth Tilley, grand worthy matron of the jurisdiction of North Carolina, will preside at the program.

Both activities are open

YMCA From Page 1

delighted that we did lead all other branches in pledges. We were committed to the project and we wanted to see it go off."

Both White and Hairston said they feel the board's pledge will have a positive effect on the YMCA's community-wide solicitation campaign, which recently began with kickoff meetings in Winston-Salem and Kernersville.

With \$4.075 million already raised through pledges from private businesses and Y board members, the Y hopes to help raise the remainder of the \$5.06 million goal with community donations.

Rolls Royce Named Club Of The Year

The Rolls Royce annually by Family Pro-Lounge was named as the Club of The Year and club owner, Ravon Rosseau, was presented an award given

education Associates last Sunday evening in a fashion show and award ceremony at A Touch of Class Club.

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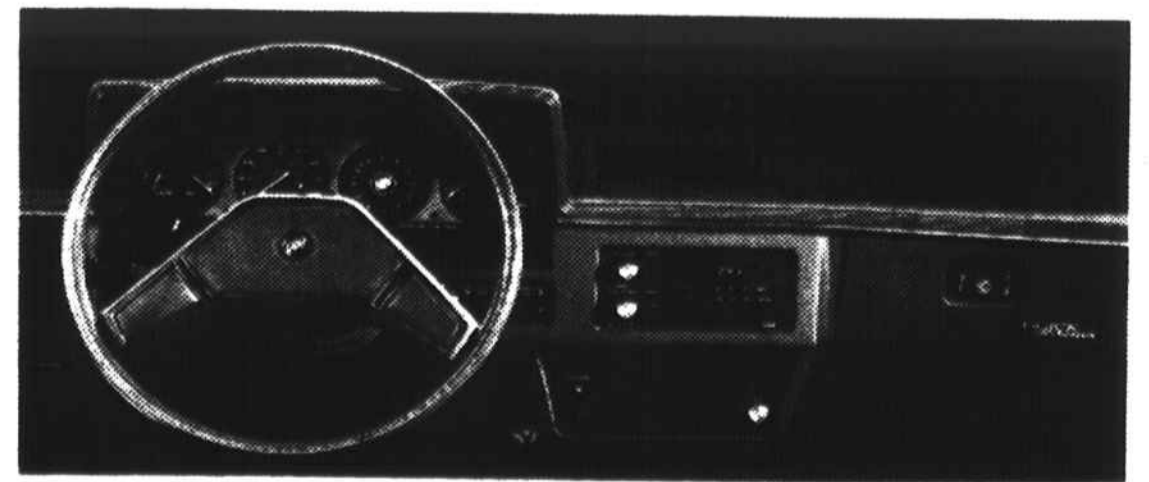
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