

Christian Myths and Urban Legends

"We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:16).

What is an urban legend? Urban legends are stories that sound good, but **have no basis in fact**. They are rumors that keep getting passed on to others, but **are not true**.

This is such a common problem that people have created a Spoof of Urban Legends and a List to Post Beside Your Computer.

Sadly, Christians seem to be especially gullible when it comes to urban legends. We believe an email because it is sent to us by a friend or because we *want* to believe it since it confirms our world view or because we are just too lazy to check it out. Unfortunately when we pass around falsehoods, we violate the command against bearing false witness and we make it harder for people to believe that our most important message (about Jesus) is true.

Christian internet users are urged to examine themselves for symptoms of the UL Virus. Symptoms include the following:

- The willingness to believe improbable stories without thinking.
- The uncontrollable urge to forward multiple copies of such stories to others.
- A lack of desire to take 3 minutes to check to see if a story is true.

Email is a powerful tool, but its ability to quickly, widely and cheaply spread false information is a danger. *"Let every matter be established,"* the Bible says. As stewards of the truth for the rest of the world, Christians need to be careful in their use of the forward button.

The following are some common Christian urban legends . . .

Christian Myths & Urban Legends

• **Urban Legend:** "The Beast," a supercomputer in Belgium, is Being Used to Track Every Human Being on Earth.

Truth: There is no "The Beast" computer. The story of the Beast Computer of Belgium is the work of fiction writer Joe Musser. He says he created it for a novel he wrote titled "Behold the Pale Horse" and for a screenplay for a film for evangelist David Wilkerson. He never intended for it to be viewed or circulated as fact.

• **UL:** Soviet Scientists Drilled into Hell. Scientists conducting deep hole drilling experiments in Siberia break through the earth's crust at more than 14 kilometers. They find it unusually hot at that depth (2,000 degrees F). As a part of trying to listen to movement in the earth's crust, they drop a microphone into the drilled hole and are horrified when they realize they are hearing the voices of millions of people crying out in torment. Terrified, they decide to abandon the project.

Truth: The original story of the deep hole drilling in Siberia came from tabloid newspapers in the early 1990's. For more details see [Drilling to Hell](#).

• **UL:** Madalyn Murray O'Hair, the noted atheist, has proposed that the Federal Communications Commission ban all religious broadcasting.

Truth: The FCC says, "Since 1975 to the present time, the FCC has received and responded to millions of inquires about these rumors." In 1985, the FCC averaged 100,000 letters per month protesting this non-existent petition. Madalyn Murray O'Hair has never submitted any such petition and has been missing and presumed dead since 1995. The FCC cannot prevent or inhibit the broadcasting of religious programs. For more detail see [Religious Broadcasting Rumor Denied](#).

• **UL:** The CDC reports HIV-tainted needles in movie theaters, MacDonald's ball pits, and in coin returns of phone booths.

Truth: There are many different variations of this legend. In spite of the stories the CDC web site says: "...no foundation in fact....CDC is not aware of any cases where HIV has been transmitted by a needle-stick injury outside a health care setting. For more details see [Frequently Repeated Rumors About HIV Transmission](#).

- **UL:** Darwin repudiated evolution and accepted Jesus before he died.

Truth: This story appears in an evangelistic tract. It would be nice if it were true, but there is no verified evidence that Darwin rejected his ideas before his death. His friends and family deny it. For more on this story see [Darwin Became a Christian and Renounced Evolution](#).

- **UL:** NASA scientists have discovered the missing day of Joshua's time.

Truth: This story has been circulating in its NASA version at least since the 1960s. NASA denies that this ever occurred. The story goes back to a book by Charles Totten entitled "Joshua's Long Day and the Dial of Ahaz: A Scientific Vindication" (1890). Harold Hill told his version in "How to Live Like a King's Kid" (1974). Hill, the former president of the Curtis Engine Company of Baltimore, was involved in diesel engine operations at Goddard, but had no involvement with any computer operations. For more detail see [Has NASA discovered Joshua's Lost Day?](#)

- **UL:** The Procter and Gamble logo is Satanic.

Truth: The real origin of the P&G symbol goes back to the 1800s when P&G was shipping candles down the Mississippi to New Orleans. Crate makers who would build the shipping crates right on the spot invented their own marks that they would carve or burn into the crate they had just built. There was some confusion about which crates held P&G candles, so a contest was held and the man-in-the-moon-with-stars symbol used by one crate maker was chosen as the winner. P&G was forced to change the symbol in the 1980s due to the persistence of this urban legend. For more details see [Does Procter & Gamble have Satanic ties?](#)

- **UL:** The Christian Church during the Middle Ages promoted the idea that the earth was flat.

Truth: Statements by Christians about the earth being flat were actually refuted by the early church fathers. During the Middle Ages there was a continuing battle between the defenders of ignorance and the enlightened science, but the church never weighed in on the side of a flat earth. Through antiquity and up to the time of Columbus, "nearly unanimous scholarly opinion pronounced the earth spherical."

In fact, not only did the church not promote the flat Earth, it is clear from such passages as [Isaiah 40:22](#) that the Bible implies the earth is spherical. For more detail on the origins of this charge against Christians see [Who invented the flat earth?](#)

- **UL:** CBS is being forced to take "Touched by an Angel" off the air, because they talk about God too much.

Truth: The petition that is named in the legend (RM-2493) was considered by the FCC in 1974 and **rejected** in 1975. Long before "Touched by an Angel" was ever on the air. For more details see [Religious Broadcasting Rumor Denied](#).

- **UL:** Halloween was a Satanic holiday.

Truth: Halloween does have some roots in a pagan (not Satanic) harvest festival. But the name of the holiday, pumpkins, and Trick-or-Treat come from good origins!

- **UL:** Mike Warnke was the head of a satanic coven before becoming a Christian.

Mike Warnke's ministry and public profile are based upon the story he tells of his previous involvement with Satanism. As written in *The Satan Seller*, the story goes like this: a young orphan boy raised in foster homes drifted from whatever family and friends he had to join a secret, all-powerful satanic cult. First, he descended into the hell of drug addiction. Then he ascended in the satanic ranks to the position of high priest, with fifteen hundred followers in three cities. He had unlimited wealth and power at his disposal, provided by members of Satanism's highest echelon, the illuminati. And then he converted to Christ. A generation of Christians learned its basic concepts of Satanism and the occult from Mike Warnke's testimony in *The Satan Seller*.

Truth: A 1992 article in Cornerstone magazine provided documentation and eyewitness testimony that contradicts the claims Mike has made about himself. Much of this testimony is by close associates and friends of Mike. The article also exposed Mike's multiple marriages and divorces as a Christian. For more detail see [Cornerstone: The Mike Warnke series](#). Mike later admitted "I am guilty of some embellishing of the story," although he stands by his previous

testimony of some satanic involvement. An accountability board from his church was organized and has provided oversight of Mike and Susan Warnke and their ministry since 1993. [Mike's web site](#) has more information.

Unfortunately Mike Warnke's "embellishments" are just one example of a long line of people who use falsehood and religion for profit (2 Corinthians 2:17). For an example of the taste that this leaves in an unbeliever's mouth see

<http://www.echonyc.com/~jkarpf/home/warnke.html>.

- **UL:** An English fisherman was swallowed by a whale, hence proving the story of Jonah.

Truth: This story has been researched very thoroughly by many people and there is no evidence to support that it ever happened. Most damaging is a letter written by the wife of the captain of the 'Star of the East,' Mrs John Killam. The contents of her letter were published in 1907 in 'The Expository Times' by a reader who had corresponded with Mrs Killam about the whale story. She said: "There is not one word of truth to the whale story. I was with my husband all the years he was in the Star of the East. There was never a man lost overboard while my husband was in her. The sailor has told a great sea yarn." Despite this, the story has been repeated by a number of conservative Christian writers, including Bernard Ramm, Harry Rimmer and the creationist Henry Morris; and also in the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on Jonah and the IVP Bible Dictionary. See [A Whale of a Tale](#) for more details.

The historical reality of Jonah doesn't need to be based on a myth. It should be based on the truthfulness of the Son of God. Jesus said, "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Jesus believed that Jonah was historical fact.

Incidentally Jonah was swallowed by a "great fish," not a whale (Jonah 1:17). Whales are extremely rare in the Mediterranean Sea. The fish was probably a whale shark which is very common in the Mediterranean and has so large a throat, that it can swallow a living

man whole. There is documented evidence of one of these sharks being captured and an entire horse was found inside. Of course, "natural explanations" should only be taken so far. The whole point of what happened to Jonah is that it was a miracle by God.

For an excellent article on how to think and research critically see [What You Know May Not Be So and How to Tell the Difference](#). The article is rather lengthy, but well worth the time reading.

Urban Legends & Virus Hoax Information

We only have a limited amount of information on a few urban legends. If you're searching for more or looking for a specific urban legend, try these sites:

- [The AFU & Urban Legends Archive](#)
- [Computer Virus Hoaxes](#)
- [Hoaxbusters](#)
- [Scambusters](#)
- [Snopes.com](#)
- [TruthOrFiction.com](#)
- [Urban Legends and Folklore](#)
- [Vmyths.com](#)