The Goddess and the Church – A New Age Deity

Feminism has invaded the realm of theology, elevating the concept of The Goddess, or Great Mother, as a pantheistic and occultic paradigm for religion acceptable to feminists, who find traditional religions unacceptable because of their "male Gods."

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

The goddess, or Great Mother, has existed since the beginning of time…it is out of the primordial depths of her womb that the Universe and all life is born. *Morwyn, Secrets Of A Witch's Coven*

Reverence for the goddess is becoming more prevalent in our day. The goddess is embraced by witchcraft, feminism, the occult, and the liberal church. The New Age that is about to dawn upon us will be, according to the occult world, a feminine age. Likewise, those who hold this view believe that this current, masculine age has been an age of destruction and broken relationships among humanity. The New Age with its feminine energies will bring balance to the destructive aspects of the Piscean Age.

Rosemary Radford Ruether in her book, *Womanguides: Readings Toward A Feminist Theology*, states "It is to the women that we look for salvation in the healing and restorative waters of Aquarius. It is to such a New Age that we look now with hope as the present age of masculism succeeds in destroying itself." According to Starhawk, a feminist and practicing witch, "the symbolism of the Goddess is not a parallel structure to the symbolism of God the Father. The Goddess does not rule the world; She is the world."(1)

In order for this feminine age to come into full fruition a shift in consciousness must take place in the world. This shift in thinking and perception of reality will bring forth the goddess.(2)

As interest in the occult continues to rise and gain popularity in our culture, the goddess becomes more popular as a deity. The modern woman is at a crossroads in her spiritual quest. It is imperative that she realize her inherent deity, her god nature, for she is to be the salvation of humanity.

According to those who hold a belief in the Great Goddess, Europe was once ruled by a matriarchal egalitarian religion. Their belief dictates that Old Europe was a culture that worshiped a matrifocal (mother-focused), sedentary, peaceful, art-loving, goddess between 5,000 and 25,000 years before the rise of the first male-oriented religion. They maintain that this egalitarian culture was overrun and destroyed by a semi-nomadic, horse-riding, Indo-European group of invaders who were patrifocal (father-focused), mobile, warlike, and indifferent to art.(3) The ease with which the peaceful goddess worshipers were subdued confirmed to the war-like Indo-European invaders their feelings of natural superiority. The matriarchal religion of these early settlers was eventually assimilated into the more dominant patriarchal religion of the invaders. As these invaders imposed their patriarchal culture on the conquered peoples, rapes(4) and myths about male warriors killing serpents appeared for the first time in their history. The serpent was a symbol of the goddess worshipers. As the assimilation of cultures continued, the Great Mother Goddess became fragmented into many lesser goddesses.

According to Merlin Stone, author of *When God Was a Woman*, the disenthronement of the Great Goddess, begun by the Indo-European invaders, was finally accomplished by the Hebrew, Christian, and Moslem religions that arose later.(5) The male deity took the prominent place. The female goddesses faded

into the background, and women in society followed suit.(6)

The Goddess and Witchcraft

In the world of witchcraft the goddess is the giver of life. Jean Shinoda Bolen, M.D., in her book, *Goddesses In Everywoman*, has this to say about the goddess:

The Great Goddess was worshiped as the feminine life force deeply connected to nature and fertility, responsible both for creating life and for destroying life.(7)

She also proclaims, "The Great Goddess was regarded as immortal, changeless, and omnipotent" prior to the coming of Christianity. For witchcraft, the goddess is the earth itself. Mother Earth or Gaia, as the goddess is known in occult circles, is an evolving being as is all of nature. In the New Age worldview, environmentalism and the ecological movement play an important part in restoring the goddess. In her best-selling book, *The Spiral Dance*, Starhawk says

> The model of the Goddess, who is immanent in nature, fosters respect for the sacredness of all living things. Witchcraft can be seen as a religion of ecology. Its goal is harmony with nature, so that life may not just survive, but thrive.(8)

Witches think of Gaia, or Mother Earth, as a biosystem. They attribute consciousness to earth and believe it to be spiritual as well. In other words, Gaia is a living and evolving being that has a spiritual destiny. Those who practice witchcraft take responsibility for Mother Earth's evolutionary development.

The environmental movement of our day is greatly influenced by those who practice witchcraft or hold neopagan beliefs. Witchcraft is an attempt to reintroduce the sacred aspect of the earth that was, according to their belief, destroyed by the Christian world. The goddess is, therefore, a direct

affront against the male- dominated religion of the Hebrew God.

Christianity taught that God was transcendent, apart from nature, and was a masculine deity. Witchcraft holds a pantheistic view of God. God is nature. Therefore, God is in all things and all things are a part of God. However, this God is in actuality a goddess and predates the male God. The goddess is the giver of all life and is found in all of creation.

> The importance of the Goddess symbol for women cannot be over stressed. The image of the Goddess inspires women to see ourselves as divine, our bodies as sacred, the changing phases of our lives as holy, our aggression as healthy, and our anger as purifying. Through the Goddess, we can discover our strength, enlighten our minds, own our bodies, and celebrate our emotions.(9)

For Betty Sue Flowers, a University of Texas English professor, the women's spirituality movement is the answer to the male-oriented religion of Christianity. She was a keynote speaker for the International Conference on Women's Spirituality in Austin, Texas, and addressed the conference on the return of the goddess. According to Flowers,

> The goddess is a metaphor that reminds us of the female side of spirituality. Metaphors are important. You can't know God directly. You can only know images of God, and each image or metaphor is a door. Some doors are open and others are closed. A door that is only male is only half open.(10)

The Goddess and Feminism

For many in the feminist world, the goddess is an expression of worship. A growing number within the feminist movement have bought into witchcraft as the central focus of their allegiance. Those who have become a part of the women's

spirituality movement reject what they call the patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition, deploring sexist language, predominantly masculine imagery and largely male leadership.(11)

In a Wall Street Journal article, Sonia L. Nazario stated, "Women first wanted to apply feminism to political and economic realms, then to their families. Now, they want it in their spiritual lives."(12)

To fully understand the implications of the women's spirituality movement one only needs to read the current literature on the subject. The editors of the book *Radical Feminism* state that "Political institutions such as religion, because they are based on philosophies of hierarchical orders and reinforce male oppression of females, must be destroyed."

Radical feminists believe that the traditional church must be dismantled. For example, in her book *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions*, Naomi Goldenburg announced,

> The feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Yahweh….It is likely that as we watch Christ and Yahweh tumble to the ground, we will completely outgrow the need for an external God.(13)

Many feminists are obviously moving away from an understanding of deity as an external "male" God who stands apart from Creation to a conception of deity as a goddess that is realized within one's inner self and is one with nature.

Some extreme feminists in the goddess movement "pray for the time when science will make men unnecessary for procreation."(14) The radical feminist see the goddess movement as a spiritual outlet for their long-held beliefs. According to Mark Muesse, an assistant professor of religious studies at Rhodes College,

> some feminist Christians push for changes ranging from the ordination of women and the generic, non-sexual terms for God and humanity to overhauling the very theology.(15)

Perhaps the most descriptive word for the feminist movement is "transformation." Catherine Keller, Associate Professor of Theology at Xavier University, in her essay "Feminism and the New Paradigm," proclaims that the world-wide feminist movement is bringing about the end of patriarchy, the eclipse of the politics of separation, and the beginning of a new era modeled on the dynamic, holistic paradigm. Radical feminism envisions that era, and the long process leading toward it, as a comprehensive transformation.

Another aspect of this transformation is the blending of the sexes. The feminist movement seeks a common mold for all of humanity. Jungian Psychotherapist John Weir Perry believes that we must find our individuality by discovering androgyny. He states,

> To reach a new consensus, we have to avoid falling back into stereotypes, and that requires truly developing our individuality. It is an ongoing work of self-realization and self- actualization. For men it means growing into their native maleness and balancing it with their femaleness. For women, it's the same growing into their full womanhood, and that includes their masculine side.(16)

This process sounds more like androgyny (or sameness) than individuality and it reflects a paradigm-shift involving nothing less than the reordering of man's understanding of God. A shift from thinking of God as male to seeing and experiencing God as a goddess: the Mother of Life.

The Goddess and the Occult

In the world of the occult, popularly known as the New Age, the goddess is believed to be resident within the individual

and simply needs to be awakened. In other words, the individual is inherently divine. Starhawk, a witch who works with the Catholic priest Matthew Fox at his Institute of Creation Spirituality, says that an individual can awaken the goddess by invoking, or inviting, her presence. Starhawk tells us,

> To invoke the Goddess is to awaken the Goddess within, to become …that aspect we invoke. An invocation channels power through a visualized image of Divinity….We are already one with the Goddess—she has been with us from the beginning, so fulfillment becomes…a matter of self-awareness. For women, the Goddess is the symbol of the inmost self. She awakens the mind and spirit and emotions.(17)

Jean Shinoda Bolen, a Jungian analyst and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, when asked the question, What ails our society?, put it this way: "We suffer from the absence of one half of our spiritual potential—the Goddess."(18) Individuals who follow New Age teaching believe that the male-dominated religion of this present age has been an injustice to humanity and the ecosystem. Therefore, there must be a balancing of energies. The male energies must diminish and the feminine energies must increase in order for the goddess to empower the individual.

The New Age of occultism promises to be an age of peace, harmony, and tranquility. Whereas the present dark age of brokenness and separation continues to bring war, conflict, and disharmony, so it is the goddess with her feminine aspects of unity, love, and peace that will offer a solution for mankind and circumvent his destruction. For many in our society this appears to be the answer to man's dilemma. However, an occult solution that denies Christ's atonement for sin cannot fully meet a holy God's requirement for wholeness.

For the pagan, the goddess represents life and all it has to offer. "The Goddess religion is a conscious attempt to reshape

culture."(19) This reshaping is nothing less than viewing man and his understanding of reality from a female-centered perspective which focuses on the Divine as being female. Therefore, considerable emphasis is placed initially on feminine attributes, but ultimately the focus is on eroticism and sexuality.

> Women are clearly the catalyst for the formation of the new spirituality. It is women above all who are in the process of reversing Genesis…by validating and freeing their sexuality.(20)

A major part of this transformative process is the empowerment of women. The rise of the goddess is a direct assault on the patriarchal foundation of Christianity. This new feminist spirituality affirms bisexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality, and androgyny (through the expression of transvestitism).

As this revival of the goddess continues, a growing lack of distinction between male and female will become the norm. Jungian Psychotherapist John Weir Perry maintains,

> Both current psychology and ancient history point to an emerging transformation in our sense of both society and self, a transformation that includes redefining the notion of what it means to be men and women.(21)

The Bible clearly indicates that men and women were created as distinctive beings, male and female. This rising occult influence in our society seeks to undermine the Biblical absolute that gives our culture stability. Once again the Bible rings true as it states,

> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables (2 Tim. 4:3).

The Goddess and the Liberal Church

The message of the goddess has gained a hearing in the church as well. The philosophy of the goddess is currently being taught in the classrooms of some of our seminaries. In a growing number of seminaries the student population is becoming increasingly female, and many of these women have a feminist outlook on life. Mary Daly, who considers herself to be a Christian feminist, says this about traditional Christianity: “To put it bluntly, I propose that Christianity itself should be castrated.”(22) The primary focus of the “Christian” feminist is to bring an end to what they perceive as male-dominated religion by “castrating” the male influence from religion. Daly continued by saying,

> I am suggesting that the idea of salvation uniquely by a male savior perpetuates the problem of patriarchal oppression.(23)

Reverend Susan Cady, co-author of *Sophia: The Future of Feminist Spirituality* and pastor of Emmanuel United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, is one example of the direction that Daly and others are taking the church. The authors of Sophia state that, “Sophia is a female, goddess-like figure appearing clearly in the Scriptures of the Hebrew tradition.”

Wisdom Feast, the authors’ latest book, clearly identifies Jesus with Sophia. Sophialogy presents Sophia as a separate goddess and Jesus as her prophet. The book takes liberty with Jesus by replacing the masculine deity with the feminine deity Sophia. Another example of how goddess “thealogy” (note feminist spelling for theology) is making its way into the liberal church is through seminars held on seminary campuses.

One such seminar was held at the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. “Wisdomweaving: Woman Embodied in Faiths” was held at the school in February of 1990. If one looks at the schedule of the seminar, it is obvious that the

emphasis was not on orthodoxy. Linda Finnell, a follower of Wicca and one of the speakers, spoke on the subject of "Returning to the Goddess Through Dianic Witchcraft." Two of the keynote speakers were of a New Age persuasion. In fact, one, Sr. Jose Hobday, works with Matthew Fox and Starhawk at the Institute for Creation Spirituality.

A growing number of churches in the United States and around the world are embracing the New Age lie. Many churches have introduced *A Course in Miracles*, Yoga, Silva Mind Control, Unity teachings, and metaphysics into their teaching material. Some churches have taken a further step into the New Age by hiring onto their staffs individuals who hold to a metaphysical worldview.

Along with the deception that is subtly gaining influence in the liberal church, there are a growing number of churches affiliated with the New Age. These churches, without apology, teach the Luciferian gospel. They are the seed-bed of the occult.

It is amazing that while the liberal church will not accept or believe in Satan, they are willing to embrace Lucifer as an angel of light. It is interesting to note that the New Age Church represents itself as the Church of Light.

Whether the individual seeks the goddess through witchcraft, the feminist movement, the New Age, or the liberal church, he or she is beginning a quest to understand and discover the "higher self." The higher self, often referred to as the "god self," is believed to be pure truth, deep wisdom. In actuality, this so-called "truth" or "wisdom" embodies the oldest lie in the Book, the lie of self- deification: "Ye shall become as Gods." As Christians we must learn to discern every spirit lest we too become deceived.

Notes

1. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance* (New York, N.Y.: Harper & Row,

Publishers, 1989), 23.

2. Elinor W. Gadon, *The Once & Future Goddess* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989), xiv.

3. Ibid., xii-xiii. See also Lynnie Levy, *Of A Like Mind* (Madison, Wis.: OALM, 1991), vol. VIII, no. 3, pp. 2-3.

4. See also Zsuzsanna Emese Budapest, *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries* (Oakland, Calif.: Susan B. Anthony Coven No. 1, 1986), 12.

5. See also Gadon, *The Once & Future Goddess*, xiii.

6.Jean Shinoda Bolen, *Goddesses in Everywoman* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 21.

7. Ibid., 20.

8. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 25.

9. Ibid., 24.

10. Carlos Vidal Greth, "The Spirit of Women," *The Austin-American Statesman*, 5 March 1991, Sec D.

11. Ibid.

12. Sonia L. Nazario, "Is Goddess Worship Finally Going to Put Men in Their Place?," *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 June 1990, sec. A.

13. Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1979), 4, 25.

14. Nazario, "Goddess Worship."

15. Deirdre Donahue, "Dawn of The Goddesses,'" *USA Today*, 26 September 1990, sec. D.

16. John Weir Perry, "Myth, Ritual, and the Decline of

Patriarchy," *Magical Blend* 33 (January 1992): 103.

17. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, 99.

18. Jean Shinoda Bolen, "The Women's Movement in Transition: The Goddess & the Grail," *Magical Blend* 33 (January 1992), 8.

19. Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance,* 11.

20. Donna Steichen, "The Goddess Goes to Washington," *Fidelity Magazine* (December 1986), 42.

21. Perry, "Decline of Patriarchy," *Magical Blend*, 62.

22. Alice Hageman, *Theology After the Demise of God the Father: A Call for the Castration of Sexist Religion* (New York: Association Press, 1974), 132.

23. Ibid., 138.

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Human Nature

Don Closson provides an overview to how naturalism, pantheism and Christian theism view human nature. He discusses questions considering how each view deals with purpose, good and evil, and death.

In the twenty-five years prior to 1993, the federal government spent 2.5 trillion dollars on welfare and aid to cities. This was enough money to buy all the assets of the top Fortune 500 firms as well as all the farmland in America at that time.({1} As part of the Great War on poverty, begun by the Johnson administration in the 1960's, the government's goal was to reduce the number of poor, and the effects of poverty on

American society. As one administration official put it, “The way to eliminate poverty is to give the poor people enough money so that they won’t be poor anymore.”{2}) Sounds simple. But offering money didn’t get rid of poverty; in fact, just the opposite has occurred. The number of children covered by the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program has gone from 4.5 percent of all children in America in 1965, to almost 13 percent of all children in 1991. One of the reasons for this increase has been the rapid deterioration of the family for those most affected by the welfare bureaucracy. Since 1960, the number of single parent families has more than tripled, reflecting high rates of children born out of wedlock and high divorce rates.{3} Rather than strengthening the family in America and ridding the country of poverty, just the opposite has occurred. Why such disastrous results from such good intentions?

Part of the answer must be found in human nature itself. Might it be, that those creating welfare policy in the 1960’s had a faulty view of human nature and thus misread what the solution to poverty should be? In this essay I will look at how three different world views—theism, naturalism, and pantheism—view human nature. Which view we adopt, both individually and as a people, will have a great influence on how we educate our children, how and if we punish criminals, and how we run our government.

Christian theism is often chided as being simplistic and lacking in sophistication, yet on this subject, it is the naturalist and pantheist who tend to be reductionistic. Both will simplify human nature in a way that detracts from our uniqueness and God-given purpose here on this planet. It should be mentioned that the views of Christian theists, naturalists, and pantheists are mutually exclusive. They might all be wrong, but they cannot all be right. The naturalist sees man as a biological machine that has evolved by chance. The pantheist perceives humankind as forgetful deity, whose

essence is a complex series of energy fields which are hidden by an illusion of this apparent physical reality. Christian theism accepts the reality of both our physical and spiritual natures, presenting a balanced, livable view of what it means to be human.

In this essay I will show how Christian theism, naturalism, and pantheism answer three important questions concerning the nature of humanity. First, are humans special in any way; do we have a purpose and origin that sets us apart from the rest of the animal world? Second, are we good, evil, or neither? Third, what happens when we die? These fundamental questions have been asked since the written word appeared and are central to what we believe about ourselves.

Are Humans Special?

One doesn't usually think of Hollywood's Terminator, as played by Arnold Schwartzenegger, as a profound thinker. Yet in *Terminator II*, the robot sent back from the future to protect a young boy asks a serious question.

> Boy: *"You were going to kill that guy!"*
>
> Terminator: *"Of course! I'm a terminator."*
>
> Boy: *"Listen to me very carefully, OK? You're not a terminator anymore. All right? You got that?! You just can't go around killing people!"*
>
> Terminator: *"Why?"*
>
> Boy: *"What do ya mean, Why? 'Cause you can't!"*
>
> Terminator: *"Why?"*
>
> Boy: *"Because you just can't, OK? Trust me on this!"*{4}

Indeed, why not terminate people? Why are they special? To a naturalist, one who believes that no spiritual reality exists,

options to this question are few. Natural scientists like astronomer Carl Sagan and entomologist E.O. Wilson find man to be no more than a product of time plus chance, an accident of mindless evolution. Psychologist Sigmund Freud and existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre agree, humankind is a biological machine, perhaps slightly more complex than other animals, but governed by the same physical needs and drives.

Yet as Mr. Spock of *Star Trek* fame put it in the original *Star Trek* movie, logic and knowledge aren't always enough. He discovered this by mind melding with V-GER, a man made machine that, after leaving our solar system, evolves into a thinking machine elsewhere in the galaxy and returns to earth to find its creator.{5} If logic and knowledge aren't enough, where do we turn to for significance or purpose? A naturalist has nowhere to turn. For example, Sartre argued that man must make his own meaning in the face of an absurd universe.{6} The best that entomologist E. O. Wilson could come up with is that we do whatever it takes to pass on our genetic code, our DNA, to the next generation. Everything we do is based on promoting survival and reproduction.{7}

Pantheists have a very different response to the question of human purpose or uniqueness. Dr. Brough Joy, a medical doctor who has accepted an Eastern view of reality, argues that all life forms are divine, consisting of complex energy fields. In fact, the entire universe is ultimately made up of this energy; the appearance of a physical reality is really an illusion.{8} Gerald Jampolsky, another doctor, argues that love is the only part of us that is real, but love itself cannot be defined.{9} This is all very consistent with pantheism which teaches a radical monism, that all is one, and all is god. But if all is god, all is just as it is supposed to be and you end up with statements like this from the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh:

> There is no purpose to life; existence is non-purposive.

> That is why it is called a leela, a play. Existence itself has no purpose to fulfill. It is not going anywhere—there is no end that it is moving toward…{10}

Christianity teaches that human beings are unique. We are created in God's image and for a purpose, to glorify God. Genesis 1:26 declares our image-bearing nature and the mandate to rule over the other creatures of God's creation. Jesus further delineated our purpose when he gave us the two commandments to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Romans 12:1 calls us to be living sacrifices to God. Unlike naturalism or pantheism, the Bible doesn't reduce us down to either just our material, physical nature or to just our spiritual nature. Christianity recognizes the real complexity of humanity as it is found in our physical, emotional and spiritual components.

Are We Good, Bad, or Neither?

To a naturalist, this notion of good and evil can only apply to the question of survival. If something promotes survival, it is good; if not, it is evil. The only real question is how malleable human behavior is. B. F. Skinner, a Harvard psychology professor, believed that humans are completely programmable via classical conditioning methods. A newborn baby can be conditioned to become a doctor, lawyer, or serial killer depending on its environment.{11}

The movie that won "Best Picture" in 1970 was a response to Skinner's theories. *A Clockwork Orange* depicted a brutal criminal being subjected to a conditioning program that would create a violent physical reaction to just the thought of doing harm to another person. Here is dialogue between the prison warden and an Anglican clergyman after a demonstration of the therapy's effectiveness.

> Clergyman: *"Choice! The boy has no real choice! Has he? Self*

> *interest! The fear of physical pain drove him to that grotesque act of self-abasement! Its insincerity was clearly to be seen. He ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice."*
>
> Warden: *"Padre, these are subtleties! We're not concerned with motives for the higher ethics. We are concerned only with cutting down crime! (Crowd Applause) And with relieving the ghastly congestion in our prisons! He will be your true Christian. Ready to turn the other cheek! Ready to be crucified rather than crucify! Sick to the very heart at the thought even of killing a fly! Reclamation! Joy before the angels of God! The point is that it works!"*{12}

Stanley Kubrick denounced this shallow view of human nature with this film, yet Skinner's behaviorism actually allows for more human flexibility than does the sociobiology of E. O. Wilson, another Harvard professor. Wilson argues that human emotions and ethics, in a general sense, have been programmed to a "substantial degree" by our evolutionary experience.{13} In other words, human beings are hard coded to respond to conditions by their evolutionary history. Good and evil seem to be beside the point.

Jean-Paul Sartre, another naturalist, rejected the limited view of the sociobiologist, believing that humans, if anything, are choosing machines. We are completely free to decide who we shall be, whether a drunk in the gutter or a ruler of nations. However, our choice is meaningless. Being a drunk is no better or worse than being a ruler. Since there is no ultimate meaning to the universe, there can be no moral value ascribed to a given set of behaviors.{14}

Pantheists also have a difficult time with this notion of good and evil. Dr. Brugh Joy has written,

> In the totality of Beingness there is no absolute anything—no rights or wrongs, no higher or lower

> aspects—only the infinite interaction of forces, subtle and gross, that have meaning only in relationship to one another.(15)

The Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh wrote,

> I am totally passive. Whatsoever happens, happens. I never question why, because there is no one to be asked.{16}

Christianity teaches that the universe was created by a personal, moral Creator God, and that it was created good. This includes humanity. But now creation is in a fallen state due to rebellion against God. This means that humans are inclined to sin, and indeed are born in a state of sinfulness. This explains both mankind's potential goodness and internal sense of justice, as well as its inclination towards evil.

What Happens at Death?

Bertrand Russell wrote over seventy books on everything from geometry to marriage. Historian Paul Johnson says of Russell that no intellectual in history offered advice to humanity over so long a period as Bertrand Russell. Holding to naturalist assumptions caused an obvious tension in Russell regarding human nature. He wrote that people are "tiny lumps of impure carbon and water dividing their time between labor to postpone their normal dissolution and frantic struggle to hasten it for others."{17} Yet Russell also wrote shortly before his death, "Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind."{18} One has to ask why he would pity these self-centered lumps of impure carbon and water?

Most people over forty begin to question the nature and consequence of death. Some become obsessed with it. A recent movie called *Flatliners* focused on what death might hold for us. It involved a number of young doctors willing to die

temporarily, to find out what was on the other side.

> Young Doctor #1: *"Wait a minute! Wait! Quite simply, why are you doing this?"*
>
> Young Doctor #2: *"Quite simply to see if there is anything out there beyond death. Philosophy failed! Religion failed! Now it's up to the physical sciences. I think mankind deserves to know!"* {19}

Philosophy has failed, religion has failed, now its science's turn to find the answers. But what can naturalism offer us? Whether we accept the sociobiology of Wilson or the existentialism of Sartre, death means extinction. If nothing exists beyond the natural, material universe, our death is final and complete.

Pantheists, on the other hand, find death to be a minor inconvenience on the road to nirvana. Reincarnation happens to all living things, either towards nirvana or further from it depending on the Karma one accrues in the current life. Although Karma may include ethical components, it focuses on one's realization of his oneness with the universe as expressed in his actions and thoughts. Depending on the particular view held, attaining nirvana is likened to a drop of water being placed in an ocean. All identity is lost; only a radical oneness exists.

Christianity denies the possibility of reincarnation and rejects naturalism's material-only universe. Hebrews 9:27 states, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment…" It has always held to a linear view of history, allowing for each person to live a single life, experience death, and then be judged by God. Revelation 20:11-12 records John's vision of the final judgment.

> "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small,

> standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books."

All three versions of what happens at death may be wrong, but they certainly can't all be right! We believe that based on the historical evidence for Christ's life and the dealings of God with the nation of Israel, the Biblical account is trustworthy. We believe that those who have placed their faith in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross will spend eternity in glorified bodies worshiping and fellowshiping with their Creator God.

Evaluation & Summary

In his autobiography, entomologist E. O. Wilson writes that as a young man he accepted Christ as his savior, but because of what he perceived to be hypocrisy in the pulpit he walked away from the church shortly after being baptized. Later at Harvard University he sat through a sermon by Dr. Martin Luther King Sr. and then a series of gospel songs sung by students from the campus. He writes that he silently wept while the songs were being sung and said to himself, "These are my people."{20} Wilson claims to be a naturalist, arguing that God doesn't exist, yet he has feelings that he can't explain and desires that do not fit his sociobiological paradigm. Even the staunchly atheistic Jean-Paul Sartre, on his death bed, had doubts about the existence of God and human significance. Naturalism is a hard worldview to live by.

In 1991 Dr. L. D. Rue addressed the American Association for The Advancement of Science and he advocated that we deceive ourselves with "A Noble Lie." A lie that deceives us, tricks us, compels us beyond self-interest, beyond ego, beyond family, nation, [and] race. "It is a lie, because it tells us that the universe is infused with value (which is a great fiction), because it makes a claim to universal truth (when

there is none), and because it tells us not to live for self-interest (which is evidently false). `But without such lies, we cannot live.'"{21} This is the predicament of modern man; either he lives honestly without hope of significance, or he creates a lie that gives a veneer of meaning. As William Lane Craig writes in his book *Reasonable Faith,*

> Man cannot live consistently and happily as though life were ultimately without meaning, value or purpose. If we try to live consistently within the atheistic worldview, we shall find ourselves profoundly unhappy. If instead we manage to live happily, it is only by giving the lie to our worldview.{22}

The pantheist is little better off. Although pantheism claims a spiritual reality, it does so by denying our personhood. We become just another impersonal force field in an unending field of forces. Life is neither going anywhere nor is there hope that evil will be judged. Everything just is, let it be.

Neither system can speak out against the injustices of the world because neither see humankind as significant. Justice implies moral laws, and a lawgiver, something that both systems deny exist. One cannot have justice without moral truth. Of the three systems, only Judeo-Christian thought provides the foundation for combating the oppression of other humans.

In J.I. Packer's *Knowing God*, Packer argues that humans beings were created to function spiritually as well as physically. Just as we need food, water, exercise, and rest for our bodies to thrive, we need to experience worship, praise, and godly obedience to live spiritually. The result of ignoring these needs will be the de-humanizing of the soul, the development of a brutish rather than saintly demeanor. Our culture is experiencing this brutishness, this destruction of the soul, on a massive scale. Only revival, which brings about personal devotion to Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy

Spirit, will reverse this trend. Since we are truly made in God's image, we will find peace and fulfillment only when we are rightly related to Him.

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A Course In Miracles – A Christian Worldview Evaluation

Former Probe staffer Russ Wise looks at the religious movement started by A Course in Miracles *from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. As he examines its origins and its tenets, he finds that it departs from true Christianity in multiple areas and is clearly a false teaching.*

Historical Background

In 1965 a Jewish atheistic psychologist from Columbia University began to channel messages from a spirit she believed to be Jesus. She ultimately produced, or she says Jesus revealed to her, well over a thousand pages of revelation during the next seven years.

According to her testimony, Helen Schucman had a difficult relationship with her department head at the university. In an attempt to move beyond their differences, they set out on a journey to find a base of common agreement. Schucman began having "highly symbolic dreams" and experiencing "strange images." Her colleague encouraged her to transcribe the content of these phenomena so they might understand them

better.

As she began to write, she was surprised to see “This is a course in miracles” appear on the paper. She went on to say that this was her introduction to the “Voice.” This voice began to give her rapid inner dictation that she took down in shorthand.

According to the dictated material, the voice of *The Course* was Jesus. As a result of the influence Christianity has had on humanity, *The Course* chose Christian terminology to convey its message. A 1977 pamphlet published by the *Foundation For Inner Peace* states, “its only purpose is to provide a way in which some people will be able to find their own Internal Teacher”—in other words, their personal “Spirit Guide.”

Key Players

There are several individuals who play key roles in spreading the message of *The Course.* Perhaps the most prominent is Marianne Williamson. A former lounge singer and now its most celebrated guru, she has become *The Course’s* media star, appearing on numerous television programs. Her most-watched and persuasive appearance was on *Oprah.* She has been Oprah’s guest on several occasions. Because of her personal interest in New Age philosophy, Oprah Winfrey purchased a thousand copies of *A Return To Love,* Williamson’s book, to give to her television audiences.

Another high profile individual, well-known in New Age circles, is Gerald Jampolsky, M.D. He is a psychiatrist, formerly on the faculty of the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco and founder of the Center for Attitudinal Healing in 1975. He has written several books based on what he has gleaned from *The Course.*

In his influential book, *Good-Bye to Guilt,* Jampolsky describes his conversion to *The Course*.

> I began to change my way of looking at the world in 1975. Until then I had considered myself a militant atheist, and the last thing I was consciously interested in was being on a spiritual pathway that would lead to God. In that year I was introduced to . . . *A Course in Miracles. . . .* My resistance was immediate. . . . Nevertheless, after reading just one page, I had a sudden and dramatic experience. There was an instantaneous memory of God, a feeling of oneness with everyone in the world, and the belief that my only function on earth was to serve God.

As a result of the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of our society, namely the baby boomer generation, there is a ready-made market for the "feel good" spirituality of *The Course.* Through the influence of Williamson, Jampolsky, and others, a growing number of Christians are being sucked into this whirlpool of spiritual confusion in which they exchange the truth for a lie.

The Course and the Mainline Church

We have already established that *The Course* uses Christian terminology and its followers believe it to be the revelation of Jesus. As a result, a number of denominations within Christendom have embraced *The Course* as being legitimate and introduced it into their churches.

Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians have used *The Course* in Sunday schools and special study groups within the church. Presently there are over 1,500 official study groups that have utilized *The Course* both inside and outside traditional Christian churches.

If It's Not Love—It Must Be Illusion

Marianne Williamson, author of the best-selling book *A Return To Love,* says that we have "a natural tendency to focus on love."

Only love is real. All that is negative is illusion. It simply does not exist. If anything negative is in your consciousness, it is real only because you give it reality by holding it in your mind. According to *The Course,* sickness, hate, pain, fear, guilt, and sin are all illusions. The *Cyclopedia In A Course In Miracles* states that "illusions are investments. They will last as long as you value them." The Cyclopedia continues, "The only way to dispel illusions is to withdraw all investment from them, and they will have no life for you because you will have put them out of your mind."

The Course sums it up this way, "There is no life outside of Heaven. Where God created life, there life must be. In any state apart from Heaven life is illusion." There you have it! It is perfectly clear—murder, rape, and other forms of evil do not exist because they do not come from "love." Try explaining to a mother who has lost a son or daughter that their loss is the result of an illusion.

The Problem of Evil

You guessed it, *The Course* also teaches that evil does not exist. It is an illusion that must be overcome by right thinking. *The Text* (i.e., volume one of *The Course*) reads, "Innocence is wisdom because it is unaware of evil, and evil does not exist." In essence what is meant is that evil does not stand on its own, that it only has reality as the individual believes its existence. So, you might say that the rape victim created her own evil situation and thereby caused her own suffering. The victim is guilty; the perpetrator had no choice.

The Problem of Guilt and Sin

A pamphlet published by the *Foundation For Inner Peace* states, "Sin is defined as a 'lack of love.' Since love is all there is, sin in the sight of the Holy Spirit is a mistake to be corrected, rather than an evil to be punished."

The Course further teaches that there is no need to feel guilt because there is no sin. Sin does not exist. The problems that man faces are a result of separation from God. This separation is only illusion because it likewise does not exist. It is only a reality for those who believe they are not part of the divine.

The Text makes this point clear where it declares that "no one is punished for sins, and the Sons of God are not sinners." As you might anticipate, there is likewise no need for the cross because there was never a transgression that needed to be dealt with by God, only a mistake. If we are a part of God, how then can we become fragmented by sin since separation (i.e., sin) does not exist?

Thought-Reversal

The stated goal of *The Course* is to change how one thinks, to change one's belief system by subtle deception. The individual is for the most part unaware of the transformation he or she is undergoing because *The Course* utilizes Christian terminology. *The Manual for Teachers* (i.e., volume three of *The Course*) boldly says, "It cannot be too strongly emphasized that this course aims at a complete reversal of thought."

Religious Recovery—The Thirteenth Step

Many who become involved in studying *The Course* are active in self-help groups such as Twelve Step programs. They are seeking to make connections in their lives and discover who they truly are. They are willing participants in this transformation.

Many are desiring some form of "spirituality" and for those who see the Bible as being too harsh, *The Course* offers what they believe to be God's correction of our misinterpretation of the original message of Jesus.

The Course becomes the "thirteenth step" in recovery for those

who are attempting to escape the rigid fundamentalism that has smothered them in the past. For them, the recovery process becomes a spiritual transformation.

The integration of psychology and spirituality becomes a lure that pulls them deeper into the web of deception and ultimately suffocates them. The biblical teaching of original sin is dismissed for the more palatable "original goodness."

This "thirteenth step" regards all faiths as a part of the whole; they are one, and a psychological unity of sorts is achieved. *The Course* becomes whatever the individual desires it to be, it is "Christian," but not if you don't want it to be. It's psychology, but more than psychology. It's not New Age, but then again it is.

The Course claims to have all of life's answers. It has become the "spiritually correct" solution to bring about peace and unity. However, in the end, this transformation brings spiritual death.

Helen Schucman's new do-it-yourself psycho-spirituality is not new. The Hindus have been taught for centuries that the world and all that is in it is *Maya,* or illusion.

Sense and Sensibilities

We must be clear that the message of *The Course in Miracles* is *not* the message of Jesus Christ. Schucman and her Course do not teach that Jesus is God incarnate yet fully human, but that He is an highly evolved being who became divine. The Bible does not allow for such an idea.

The Bible also leaves no room for the idea that evil does not exist, but instead that evil entered the world through disobedience. Likewise, the Bible does not allow for the idea that God is a universal oneness rather than a personal Being.

Kenneth Wapnick, a Jewish agnostic who later became a Catholic

monk, founded the *Foundation for A Course in Miracles.* Wapnick states that *The Course* and biblical Christianity are not compatible. He gives three reasons why he holds such a view. First, *The Course* teaches that God did not create the world. Second, *The Course* teaches that we are all equally Christ. Jesus is not the *only* Son of God. And third, *The Course* is clear in its teaching that Jesus did not suffer and die for man's sin.

The above differences clearly show why a Christian cannot in good faith consider *The Course* as a source for his or her spiritual understanding. It is unequivocally anti-biblical and is without doubt promoted by Satanic deception (2 Corinthians 11:14: 1 Timothy 4:1).

A Short Course in Doctrine

The Course teaches that there are no absolutes; truth is relative and is determined by one's experience. According to the *Cyclopedia In A Course In Miracles,* "only what is loving is true." So truth is subjective.

Marianne Williamson, the author of *A Return To Love,* made this observation about truth in her book: "There's only one truth, spoken different ways, and the Course is just one path to it out of many." In other words, no one religious tradition has all the truth, but there are many avenues to the truth and the individual has the freedom to choose the path most suitable to him or her.

Who Is Jesus?

According to Williamson, Jesus is one of many enlightened beings. In her text she makes this statement, "Jesus and other enlightened masters are our evolutionary elder brothers." She continues by saying that "the mutation, the enlightened ones, (including Jesus) show the rest of us our evolutionary potential. They point the way." So in reality Jesus is a way-shower.

Williamson makes a telling observation on page 41 of her book by saying that *"A Course In Miracles* does not push Jesus. Although the books come from him, it is made very clear that you can be an advanced student of the Course and not relate personally to him at all." This is an interesting comment regarding the lack of relationship one is to have with their God. For Christians, faith is built on a personal relationship with Jesus. Without it, their salvation would be in question.

Williamson continues by saying, "Jesus reached total actualization of the Christ mind, and was then given by God the power to help the rest of us reach that place within ourselves." Such a statement brings to mind Matthew 7:23 where Jesus says, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

The Christ and Salvation

The Manual For Teachers states that "Jesus became what all of you must be." It continues by declaring, "Is he the Christ? O yes, along with you."

The Course identifies with much of New Age thought in that it teaches false Christology. New Age proponents teach that *The Christ* is the one who is the most highly evolved being during a given age. This Christ, whether it be Buddha, Krishna, or Jesus, is the messiah for a given age. They believe, for example, that Jesus was *The Christ* for the Church or Piscean Age. According to their philosophy, Jesus achieved Christhood and by right-thinking we too can achieve Christhood.

The Text says that, "Christ waits for your acceptance of Him as yourself, and of His wholeness as yours." Keep in mind that these words you have just read are, according to *The Course,* the "spirit-dictated" words of Jesus. Now hear the true Word of God from the Bible where we read, "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many" (Matthew 24:4-5). The

Scripture is crystal clear about the deception of multitudes by signs and wonders based in experience rather than His Word.

The Scripture teaches that Jesus alone is the Christ, the Son of the living God. John 1:20 and 20:31 indicate that we are not His equals.

Abandoning Your Miracle

There are a growing number of people waking up to the fact that *The Course* cannot adequately meet their growing need to worship a being beyond themselves, much less defend them in spiritual warfare.

Warren and Joy Smith are examples of how *The Course* is totally inadequate when it comes to defending one's spirit from the evil one and his dominion. The Smiths were deeply involved in the study of *The Course*. Warren relates Joy's story in his book, *The Light That Was Dark.*

Joy was being spiritually harassed by a man who was highly proficient in astral projection (projecting his spirit for great distances). Warren relates how they faced the attacks. "We tried every metaphysical and spiritual technique we had ever learned—we repeated our *Course in Miracles* lessons, did visualizations, prayed as best we knew how, sent the spiritual intruder blessings, and kept the whole situation surrounded in white light—but none of it had any effect. We had to wait it out. The spiritual presence was calling the shots."

After an intense time of frustration, they went to their course study leaders for help. Joy explained that they "had repeatedly applied their *Course in Miracles* lessons, such as: 'There is nothing to fear,' 'In my defenselessness my safety lies,' and, 'I could see peace instead of this.'" After explaining that nothing had worked, Frank, their study leader, "made it clear that he agreed with the Course's metaphysical teaching that evil was only an illusion and that the experience was probably something that Joy was working out

within herself."

Frank's wife, Trudy, was dazed when she heard herself say, "Put on the whole armor of God and stand fast against the wiles of the devil!" In amazement at herself she added, "Ephesians 6:10. It's in your Bible."

Trudy went on and said, "I'm sorry, Frank. There is a devil . . . read Ephesians!" In the days ahead Joy continued to undergo the harassing attacks. During this time of uncertainty Warren visited a bookstore and discovered a book entitled *The Beautiful Side of Evil* by Johanna Michaelsen. He read it through and decided its message of deliverance was worth a try.

It wasn't long before he had an opportunity to test his newly found discovery—biblical exorcism. Joy fell into a depression as she had on so many occasions, and Warren seized the opportunity to act.

He relates the incident in his book this way, "Reading from my notes the exact words that I had taken from Johanna's book, I firmly addressed the presence. 'Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I command you to be gone! I forbid your presence here. I claim the protection of the blood of Jesus upon us. Go where Jesus sends you!" Immediately Joy's face cleared and the oppression was gone.

Warren later remarked, "We were amazed that the presence left every time we called on his [Jesus Christ's] name. Nothing in *A Course in Miracles* or any other metaphysical teachings had ever talked about this aspect of Jesus."

Warren and Joy's encounter with personal evil ultimately convinced them that the Bible was the spiritual teaching that they could rely on. Warren said it best, "So far it hasn't let us down."

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Christ in a New Age

In April of 1982 a full-page ad appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* and other major newspapers around the world. The ad headline read “The Christ Is Now Here.” Notice the term *The Christ*. This is a direct reference to a coming “Messiah” who is expected to usher in a New Age of peace and unity. The term New Age refers to “a time of transformation, a time that will bring great change.”

The change that is to come (which many believe is already here) will be a renewed emphasis on the self and self-discovery. This self-discovery is rooted in paganism, witchcraft, and Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

The New Age Movement has become an umbrella term for the “rising interest in the occult in our day.” Within occult circles the Movement is perhaps better known as the Aquarian Age, the Human Potential Movement, the Holistic Health Movement, or simply Cosmic Humanism. In all of these systems, human beings are seen as free to do their own thing without any accountability to anyone or anything beyond themselves.

In the occult world it is a common belief that there are twelve ages in evolutionary time and that each age lasts approximately two thousand years. Astrologers believe that the current age of Pisces will phase out of existence as we near the year 2000, and the New Age of Aquarius will take its place.

During this time of change and spiritual deception, a growing number of people are embracing New Age practices. About 67 percent of American adults claim to have had a psychic experience. Twenty- five percent of the population believe in

reincarnation and among college students that percentage rises to thirty. Forty-two percent of American adults believe that they have been in contact with individuals who have died. One survey stated that (1) 67 percent of American adults regularly read their astrological forecast and (2) school childrens' belief in astrology is growing dramatically from 40 percent in 1978 to 59 percent in 1984.

Male vs. Female Energies

According to occult thought, the Piscean Age has as its foundation the male-centered energies that characterize Christianity. The Aquarian Age, on the other hand, is an attempt to bring balance back into the evolutionary process by introducing female energies into our understanding. Those who have embraced this new-age understanding of humanity believe that all of the problems that man faces are a direct result of Christianity and its perceived male- centered belief system.

Therefore, a change in man's thinking must occur to bring about a more equal system that will allow feminine energies to govern humanity. This female-centered system will be based on intuition and experience rather than logic and rational thought, the latter being seen as male characteristics.

The Bible teaches us that human beings, both male and female, are accountable to the God of creation and are equal in His sight (Gal. 3:28). We are not divine beings who are simply ignorant of our god- like state (Ps. 100:3).

Back to the Future

The past fifty years have given rise to Secular Humanism, the notion that "man and the rest of the material universe are all there is and that there is no supernatural realm and certainly no God." This idea fostered the view that man is only accountable to himself. However, Secular Humanism offers little or no hope to humanity and fails to provide any answers

concerning the possibility of human existence after death.

Because Secular Humanism cannot answer man's spiritual questions, many people consider it to be an inadequate answer for individuals seeking wholeness in body, mind,and spirit. Thus even though Secular Humanism has largely replaced Christianity as the dominant religious and philosophical system in the West and established itself as a more "tolerant" way, it cannot answer man's deep questions about himself and his future.

New Age occultism seemingly had the answer. It allowed man to maintain his evolutionary prominence and regain the lost "spirituality" he had previously placed at the altar of humanism. The New Age Movement has permitted man to move toward an evolutionary future in which he becomes an autonomous god who is answerable to no one but himself.

In contrast, the Bible clearly teaches that man is finite and limited in his knowledge of himself and his universe. Isaiah 55:8-9 clearly indicates God's perspective of man's inability to achieve divinity:

> *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,*
> *Neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.*
> *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,*
> *So are My ways higher than your ways,*
> *And My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Likewise, the Scripture identifies the attributes of God as being all-knowing (Matt. 19:26), all-powerful (Rev. 19:6), holy (Rev. 4:8), eternal (Ps.90:2), and loving (1 John 4:16). Man obviously misses the mark on all the above qualities, and it becomes quite apparent that he really is less than divine.

New Possibilities or New Age Lies

The New Age offers man the same deal the serpent offered Eve

in the garden. If you eat of this fruit (in this case the idea that you are divine), you will become like God—knowing good from evil. All you need to do is deepen your awareness of this new reality by becoming more open to the Christ within.

The occult world teaches that man is a spiritual being and that God, as an energy force, is inherently within all mankind. Therefore, there has never really been a separation or estrangement, only a belief in one. The New Ager believes that all of life is connected and a part of the whole. Oneness is a goal to be achieved. Man and God are one.

New Age philosopher Benjamin Creme, in his book *The Reappearance of the Christ and the Masters of Wisdom*, points out that "in a sense there is no such thing as God, God does not exist. And in another sense, there is nothing else but God: only God exists. . . . All is God. And because all is God, there is no God."

Confused? You should be! In other words, God is impersonal. Creme is saying that God is not a person, but that He is an energy that is in all things; therefore, you are divine, along with the rest of creation.

The Scripture, however, is clear in its teaching that God is a personal being and distinct from His creation. God, the Father, has a personal nature. For example, God has a will (Matt. 6:10 and 1 John 2:17), God knows (2 Tim. 2:19), God plans (Eph. 1:11), and God communicates (Ex. 3:13 14). God is distinct or separate from the world, but He is actively involved with His creation (Heb. 11:3; Col. 1:17; Ps. 113:5-6; Isa. 57:15).

Jesus: The Way, or the Way-shower?

For the New Ager, Jesus is one of many Christs who appear in a given age to direct humanity toward the divine—in effect, to show the way to divinity. Jesus was a man who by virtue of his

working through the spiritual road-blocks of his life gained the highest evolutionary level that man can achieve and was given the office of “Christ.”

Scripture, however, does not allow for such a view. Nor did Jesus consider Himself one of many Christs who would come to point man toward his own personal divinity. John 14:6 is clear in its meaning: there is only one way to the Father and that way is by accepting Jesus as Who He claimed to be, the God-man, the only begotten Son of God. He is not simply one who shows the way, but **is** The Way.

Not only did Jesus confess His deity (Matt. 22:41-45; 26:61-64; Jn. 10:30-33), but His Father likewise acknowledged His deity (Heb. 1:5-8). Jesus is the Word (John 1:1); He is the first born of all creation (Col. 1:15), and the gate by which we must enter for salvation (John. 10:7 9).

Within the New Age belief system, Lucifer is not seen as an evil personality but is looked upon as the angel of man’s inner evolution. He opened the doorway to man’s recognition of himself as god.

In his book *Reflections On The Christ*, David Spangler says that “Lucifer is literally the angel of experience. Lucifer, then, is neither good or bad in his true essence. He is completely neutral. He is an agent of God’s love acting through evolution.” So Lucifer is a positive influence on man who desires the best for humanity and does not embody evil in any form.

Spangler goes on to say, “Lucifer comes to give us the final gift of wholeness. If we accept it then he is free and we are free. That is the Luciferic initiation. It is one that many people now…will be facing, for it is an initiation into the New Age.”

The Scriptures do not allow for such a view. Jesus is the deliverer, Lucifer is the deceiver (John 8:44). Jesus is the

savior, Lucifer is the accuser (Rev. 12:10). The “initiation” that man must receive is in reality a free gift from God (John 10:7-11). It is not a mystical experience from this world that leads to spiritual death but a gift to be appropriated that leads to eternal life.

Salvation for a New Age

At-one-ment, or absorption into the One energy that is God, is a prominently held view of most New Agers’ understanding of salvation. It is the unfolding of one’s consciousness to the point that the “True Self,” the divine nature, is realized. As a flower unfolds petal by petal, so too does spiritual evolution unfold, revealing the deeper realms of God-consciousness.

In New Age thinking, salvation is “the gaining of enlightenment.” It is a state of consciousness in which the person’s separation from other humans is transcended and unity is achieved. It is the absorption of the one into the all. Individuals lose their distinctive personality and become one with the impersonal energy they believe to be God.

Christianity teaches that humans are finite beings who only become whole, in the biblical sense, when they receive God’s spirit (Tit. 3:5; 1 John. 5:11). Therefore, true spirituality results from an act; it is not simply a part of human nature (1 John. 1:8-9, Rom. 10:8-9).

Education and New Age Humanism

We said earlier that Secular Humanism lost a lot of its popularity and power because it wasn’t satisfying. It didn’t adequately meet man’s needs or fulfill his spiritual yearnings, especially his concerns about life after death. Still the humanist philosophy is a continued threat to the Judeo-Christian worldview, but now the dominant threat from humanism is New Age Humanism a marriage of New Age

spirituality with Humanism's man-centered thought system.

Humanism was and is a real threat to our Christian heritage, but the Eastern philosophical ideas found in New Age thought are even more dangerous to our way of life. Bringing the two systems together into New Age Humanism is more deadly still because in this new synthesis is both a seductive, false religious system and an agenda-driven philosophical system. Inherent in New Age Humanism is an evangelistic zeal to convert (or subvert) the opposition, and gaining influence on the young is a primary goal. One method is getting control of our educational program.

For example, in the early eighties, *Instructor* magazine, a publication for teachers, carried an article entitled, "Your Kids are Psychic! But they may never know it without your help." The article says that "teachers in particular are in a position to play an exciting role in the psychic development of children." The article goes on to identify psychic ability as the practice of telepathy, clairvoyance, and other psycho-technologies.

Another example of the Eastern influence on education is the teaching of the late Dr. Beverly Galyean. Her primary premise is as follows:

> *In essence we are not individuals but part of the universal consciousness [which is God]. Realizing this essential unity, and experiencing oneself as part of it, is a major goal for a child's education. Because each person is part of the universal consciousness which is love, each child contains all the wisdom and love of the universe. This wisdom and love is the higher self. The child can tap into this universal mind and receive advice, information and help from it. This is usually done through meditation and contact with spirit guides.*

Dr. Galyean continues by saying that "once we begin to see

that we are all God…the whole purpose of life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that, we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness."

An example of this philosophy is found in Dr. Jean Houston's text *The Possible Human*. Dr. Houston, the past president of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, espouses a New Age understanding of education. She refers to "The Master Teacher" as being an inner ally who has urgent messages to send us. Houston says that "if we cooperate with them that is, with our own deepest knowing we begin to notice an astounding change in our lives." In other words, she is talking about demonic spirit guides that will seduce the individual into the occult world.

Another example is found in a college level textbook that is most often used on the freshman level. The text *Becoming A Master Student* includes a chapter titled "You create it all" in which students are told that they create everything including the lectures they attend, the textbooks, their instructors, and their classmates. All those things they are absolutely certain they do not control the weather, wars, world hunger, the planets in actuality, they create those, too.

Our response is obvious: we must speak on behalf of our children in the educational arena. Unless we achieve this goal, we will have emotionally and spiritually lost the battle for our childrens' future.

A Biblical Response

Transformation is the key element in the recipe to bring about the New Age. Change must take place in the lives of individuals as well as society. The New Ager sees his transformation as his becoming one with the universe, and as

equal with all therefore, he has no need for a savior. He becomes more and more introspective as he looks within himself for answers, guidance, and so on.

Likewise, transformation is an important element in Christianity. The Christian is to be transformed (Rom. 12:2) from within, thereby presenting himself wholly acceptable to God. We are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17), with a new nature (Eph. 4:24). This inward transformation, a renewing of the mind, results in an outward expression of care and concern for others.

For the New Ager, transformation is an open door to the occult world; for the Christian,transformation is the process whereby the believer becomes more Christlike.

God has called us out of darkness to become sons and daughters of His Light, His Truth, and His Kingdom (John 3:19-21). The New Age world lies in darkness, and God is calling the Christian to bring a candle and penetrate the darkness.

Evangelizing the New Ager

When witnessing to a New Ager it is helpful to begin your discussion on a topic of common interest where you share a compatible view. In so doing you establish a non-threatening precedent for fair treatment in your communication.

Issues that may be common to both parties the rejection of humanism, human rights, or ecology would be a good place to begin your discussion. Remember your goal is to be a positive witness and to proclaim the saving grace of Jesus. Consider these points for effective witnessing:

- *Pray that God will give you direction as you share.*

- *Always define one another's terms and establish a biblical reference. This is necessary even though New Agers will be unlikely to accept the Bible as authoritative.*

• Stress the uniqueness of Jesus as the Savior and His resurrection as proof of His true divinity.

• Remember that arguing is not a positive witness. It is important to share your personal relationship with the Lord. A personal relationship with Jesus is virtually impossible for the New Ager since he views God as being impersonal.

• Look for opportunities to present Jesus as a person who is knowable and who desires a relationship.

• Help him recognize the reality of evil and see that Jesus is his only avenue of escape.

• Show him that man's problem is sin and not ignorance of his personal divinity. The New Ager must realize that because of his personal sin he is unable to escape the reality of separation from God. Jesus, as the only sinless Son of God, is the answer.

Salvation for the New Ager is oneness with all of creation. You want him to understand not only God's grace, but also Christ's sacrifice on the cross which was sufficient for the New Ager as well.

This New Age of Aquarius that is to come upon the scene in the near future has eroded much of the Christian consensus that was once held. The challenge of the Christian church is great, but it must be met. If not, our culture will increasingly return to paganism.

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The Worldview of Jurassic Park – A Biblical Christian Assessment

Dr. Bohlin examines the message of Jurassic Park, bringing out some of the underlying messages on science, evolution, new age thinking, and cloning. The movie may be entertaining, but a Christian scientist points out some of the misconceptions people are taking away from the movie. Remember, this is just a piece of fiction—not a scientific treatise.

The Intent Behind *Jurassic Park*

Driving home after seeing the movie *Jurassic Park* in the first week of its release, I kept seeing tyrannosaurs and velociraptors coming out from behind buildings, through intersections, and down the street, headed straight at me. I would imagine: What would I do? Where would I turn? I certainly wouldn't shine any lights out of my car or scream. Dead give-aways to a hungry, angry dinosaur. Then I would force myself to realize that it was just a movie. It was not reality. My relief would take hold only briefly until the next intersection or big building.

In case you can't tell, I scare easily at movies. *Jurassic Park* terrified me. It all looked so real. Steven Spielberg turned out the biggest money-making film in history. Much of the reason for that was the realistic portrayal of the dinosaurs. But there was more to *Jurassic Park* than great special effects. It was based on the riveting novel by Michael Crichton and while many left the movie dazzled by the dinosaurs, others were leaving with questions and new views of

science and nature.

The movie *Jurassic Park* was terrific entertainment, but it was entertainment with a purpose. The purpose was many-fold and the message was interspersed throughout the movie, and more so throughout the book. My purpose in this essay is to give you some insight into the battle that was waged for your mind throughout the course of this movie.

Jurassic Park was intended to warn the general public concerning the inherent dangers of biotechnology first of all, but also science in general. Consider this comment from the author Michael Crichton:

Biotechnology and genetic engineering are very powerful. The film suggests that [science's] control of nature is elusive. And just as war is too important to leave to the generals, science is too important to leave to scientists. Everyone needs to be attentive.{1}

Overall, I would agree with Crichton. All too often, scientists purposefully refrain from asking ethical questions concerning their work in the interest of the pursuit of science.

But now consider director Steven Spielberg, quoted in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal:* "There's a big moral question in this story. DNA cloning may be viable, but is it acceptable?"{2} And again in the *New York Times*, Spielberg said, "Science is intrusive. I wouldn't ban molecular biology altogether, because it's useful in finding cures for AIDS, cancer and other diseases. But it's also dangerous and that's the theme of *Jurassic Park*."{3} So Spielberg openly states that the real theme of *Jurassic Park* is that science is intrusive.

In case you are skeptical of a movie's ability to communicate this message to young people today, listen to this comment from an eleven-year-old after seeing the movie. She said,

“Jurassic Park’s message is important! We shouldn’t fool around with nature.”{4} The media, movies and music in particular, are powerful voices to our young people today. We cannot underestimate the power of the media, especially in the form of a blockbuster like *Jurassic Park*, to change the way we perceive the world around us.

Many issues of today were addressed in the movie. Biotechnology, science, evolution, feminism, and new age philosophy all found a spokesman in *Jurassic Park*.

The Dangers of Science, Biotechnology, and Computers

The movie *Jurassic Park* directly attacked the scientific establishment. Throughout the movie, Ian Malcolm voiced the concerns about the direction and nature of science. You may remember the scene around the lunch table just after the group has watched the three velociraptors devour an entire cow in only a few minutes. Ian Malcolm brashly takes center stage with comments like this: “The scientific power….didn’t require any discipline to attain it….So you don’t take any responsibility for it.”{5} The key word here is responsibility. Malcolm intimates that Jurassic Park scientists have behaved irrationally and irresponsibly.

Later in the same scene, Malcolm adds, “Genetic power is the most awesome force the planet’s ever seen, but, you wield it like a kid that’s found his dad’s gun.” Genetic engineering rises above nuclear and chemical or computer technology because of its ability to restructure the very molecular heart of living creatures. Even to create new organisms. Use of such power requires wisdom and patience. Malcolm punctuates his criticism in the same scene when he says, “Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn’t stop to think if they should.”

Malcolm’s criticisms should hit a raw nerve in the scientific

community. As Christians we ask similar questions and raise similar concerns when scientists want to harvest fetal tissue for research purposes or experiment with human embryos. If Malcolm had limited his remarks to *Jurassic Park* only, I would have no complaint. But Malcolm extends the problem to science as a whole when he comments that scientific discovery is the rape of the natural world. Many youngsters will form the opinion that all scientists are to be distrusted. A meaningful point has been lost because it was wielded with the surgical precision of a baseball bat.

Surprisingly, computers take a more subtle slap in the face—surprising because computers were essential in creating many of the dinosaur action scenes that simply could not be done with robotic models. You may remember early in the movie, the paleontological camp of Drs. Grant and Satler where Grant openly shows his distrust of computers. The scene appears a little comical as the field- tested veteran expresses his hate for computers and senses that computers will take the fun out of his quaint profession.

Not so comical is the portrayal of Dennis Nedry, the computer genius behind *Jurassic Park*. You get left with the impression that computers are not for normal people and the only ones who profit by them or understand them are people who are not to be trusted. Nedry was clearly presented as a dangerous person because of his combination of computer wizardry and his resentment of those who don't understand him or computers. Yet at the end of the movie, a young girl's computer hacking ability saves the day by bringing the system back on line.

The point to be made is that technology is not the villain. Fire is used for both good and evil purposes, but no one is calling for fire to be banned. It is the worldview of the culture that determines how computers, biotechnology, or any other technology is to be used. The problem with *Jurassic Park* was the arrogance of human will and lack of humility before God, not technology.

The Avalanche of Evolutionary Assumptions

There were many obvious naturalistic or evolutionary assumptions built into the story which, while not totally unexpected, were too frequently exaggerated and overplayed.

For instance, by the end of the book and the film you felt bludgeoned by the connection between birds and dinosaurs. Some of these connections made some sense. An example would be the similarities between the eating behavior of birds of prey and the tyrannosaur. It is likely that both held their prey down with their claws or talons and tore pieces of flesh off with their jaws or beaks. A non-evolutionary interpretation is simply that similarity in structure indicates a similarity in function. An ancestral relationship is not necessary.

But many of the links had no basis in reality and were badly reasoned speculations. The owl-like hoots of the poison-spitting dilophosaur jumped out as an example of pure fantasy. There is no way to guess or estimate the vocalization behavior from a fossilized skeleton.

Another example came in the scene when Dr. Alan Grant and the two kids, Tim and Lex, meet a herd of gallimimus, a dinosaur similar in appearance to an oversized ostrich. Grant remarks that the herd turns in unison like a flock of birds avoiding a predator. Well, sure, flocks of birds do behave this way, but so do herds of grazing mammals and schools of fish. So observing this behavior in dinosaurs no more links them to birds than the webbed feet and flattened bill of the Australian platypus links it to ducks! Even in an evolutionary scheme, most of the behaviors unique to birds would have evolved after the time of the dinosaurs.

A contradiction to the hypothesis that birds evolved from dinosaurs is the portrayal of the velociraptors hunting in packs. Mammals behave this way, as do some fishes such as the sharks, but I am not aware of any birds or reptiles that do.

The concealment of this contradiction exposes the sensational intent of the story. It is used primarily to enhance the story, but many will assume that it is a realistic evolutionary connection.

Finally, a complex and fascinating piece of dialogue in the movie mixed together an attack on creationism, an exaltation of humanism and atheism, and a touch of feminist male bashing. I suspect that it was included in order to add a little humor and to keep aspects of political correctness in our collective consciousness. Shortly after the tour of the park begins and before they have seen any dinosaurs, Ian Malcolm reflects on the irony of what *Jurassic Park* has accomplished. He muses, "God creates dinosaurs. God destroys dinosaurs. God creates man. Man destroys God. Man creates dinosaurs." To which Ellie Satler replies, "Dinosaurs eat man. Woman inherits the earth!" Malcolm clearly mocks God by indicating that not only does man declare God irrelevant, but also proceeds to duplicate God's creative capability by creating dinosaurs all over again. We are as smart and as powerful as we once thought God to be. God is no longer needed.

While the movie was not openly hostile to religious views, Crichton clearly intended to marginalize theistic views of origins with humor, sarcasm, and an overload of evolutionary interpretations.

Jurassic Park and the New Age

Ian Malcolm, in the scene in the biology lab as the group inspects a newly hatching velociraptor, pontificates that "evolution" has taught us that life will not be limited or extinguished. "If there is one thing the history of evolution has taught us, it's that life will not be contained. Life breaks free. It expands to new territories, it crashes through barriers, painfully, maybe even dangerously, but, uh, well, there it is!….I'm simply saying that, uh, life finds a way."

Evolution is given an intelligence all its own! Life finds a way. There is an almost personal quality given to living things, particularly to the process of evolution. Most evolutionary scientists would not put it this way. To them evolution proceeds blindly, without purpose, without direction. This intelligence or purposefulness in nature actually reflects a pantheistic or new age perspective on the biological world.

The pantheist believes that all is one and therefore all is god. God is impersonal rather than personal and god's intelligence permeates all of nature. Therefore the universe is intelligent and purposeful. Consequently a reverence for nature develops instead of reverence for God. In the lunch room scene Malcolm says, "The lack of humility before nature being displayed here, staggers me." Malcolm speaks of Nature with a capital "N." While we should respect and cherish all of nature as being God's creation, humility seems inappropriate. Later in the same scene, Malcom again ascribes a personal quality to nature when he says, "What's so great about discovery? It's a violent penetrative act that scars what it explores. What you call discovery, I call the rape of the natural world." Apparently, any scientific discovery intrudes upon the private domain of nature. Not only is this new age in its tone, but it also criticizes Western culture's attempts to understand the natural world through science.

There were other unusual new age perspectives displayed by other characters. Paleobotanist Ellie Satler displayed an uncharacteristically unscientific and feminine, or was it New Age, perspective when she chastened John Hammond for thinking that there was a rational solution to the breakdowns in the park. You may remember the scene in the dining hall, where philanthropist John Hammond and Dr. Satler are eating ice cream while tyrannosaurs and velociraptors are loose in the park with Dr. Grant, Ian Malcolm, and Hammond's grandchildren. At one point, Satler says, "You can't think your way out of

this one, John. You have to feel it." Somehow, the solution to the problem is to be found in gaining perspective through your emotions, perhaps getting in touch with the "force" that permeates everything around us as in *Star Wars*.

Finally, in this same scene, John Hammond, provides a rather humanistic perspective on scientific discovery. He is responding to Ellie Satler's criticisms that a purely safe and enjoyable *Jurassic Park*, is not possible. Believing that man can accomplish anything he sets his mind to, Hammond blurts out, "Creation is a sheer act of will!" If men and women were gods in the pantheistic sense, perhaps this would be true of humans. But if you think about it, this statement is truer than first appears, for the true Creator of the universe simply spoke and it came into being. The beginning of each day's activity in Genesis 1 begins with the phrase, "And God said."

Creation is an act of will, but it is the Divine Will of the Supreme Sovereign of the universe. And we know this because the Bible tells us so!

They Clone Dinosaurs Don't They?

The movie *Jurassic Park* raised the possibility of cloning dinosaurs. Prior to the release of the movie, magazines and newspapers were filled with speculations concerning the real possibility of cloning dinosaurs. The specter of cloning dinosaurs was left too much in the realm of the eminently possible. Much of this confidence stemmed from statements from Michael Crichton, the author of the book, and producer Steven Spielberg.

Scientists are very reluctant to use the word "never." But this issue is as safe as they come. Dinosaurs will never be cloned. The positive votes come mainly from Crichton, Spielberg, and the public. Reflecting back on his early research for the book, Michael Crichton said, "I began to

think it really could happen."{6} The official *Jurassic Park* Souvenir magazine fueled the speculation when it said, "The story of *Jurassic Park* is not far-fetched. It is based on actual, ongoing genetic and paleontologic research. In the words of Steven Spielberg: This is not science fiction; it's science eventuality."{7} No doubt spurred on by such grandiose statements, 58% of 1000 people polled for *USA Today* said they believe that scientists will be able to recreate animals through genetic engineering.{8}

Now contrast this optimism with the more sobering statements from scientists. The *Dallas Morning News* said, "You're not likely to see Tyrannosaurus Rex in the Dallas Zoo anytime soon. Scientists say that reconstituting any creature from its DNA simply won't work."{9} And *Newsweek* summarized the huge obstacles when it said, "Researchers have not found an amber-trapped insect containing dinosaur blood. They have no guarantee that the cells in the blood, and the DNA in the cells, will be preserved intact. They don't know how to splice the DNA into a meaningful blueprint, or fill the gaps with DNA from living creatures. And they don't have an embryo cell to use as a vehicle for cloning."{10} These are major obstacles. Let's look at them one at a time.

First, insects in amber. DNA has been extracted from insects encased in amber from deposits as old as 120 million years.{11} Amber does preserve biological tissues very well. But only very small fragments of a few individual genes were obtained. The cloning of gene fragments is a far cry from cloning an entire genome. Without the entire intact genome, organized into the proper sequence and divided into chromosomes, it is virtually impossible to reconstruct an organism from gene fragments.

Second, filling in the gaps. The genetic engineers of *Jurassic Park* used frog DNA to shore up the missing stretches of the cloned dinosaur DNA. But this is primarily a plot device to allow for the possibility of amphibian environmentally-

induced sex change. An evolutionary scientist would have used reptilian or bird DNA which would be expected to have a higher degree of compatibility. It is also very far-fetched that an integrated set of genes to perform gender switching which does occur in some amphibians, could actually be inserted accidentally and be functional.

Third, a viable dinosaur egg. The idea of placing the dinosaur genetic material into crocodile or ostrich eggs is preposterous. You would need a real dinosaur egg of the same species as the DNA. Unfortunately, there are no such eggs left. And we can't recreate one without a model to copy. So don't get your hopes up. There will never be a real *Jurassic Park*!

Notes

1. Sharon Begley, "Here come the DNAsaurs," *Newsweek*, 14 June 1993, 61.

2. Patrick Cox, "*Jurassic Park*, A Luddite Monster," The *Wall Street Journal*, 9 July 1993.

3. Steven Spielberg, quoted by Patrick Cox, *WSJ*, 9 July 1993.

4. Cox, *WSJ*, 9 July 1993.

5. From this point on all dialogue is from the movie *Jurassic Park*, Kathleen Kennedy and Gerald R. Molen, Producers, copyright 1993, Universal City Studios, Inc., and Amblin Entertainment.

6. Michael Crichton, quoted in "Crichton's Creation," *The Jurassic Park Official Souvenir Magazine*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: The Topps Company, Inc., 1993), 4.

7. "Welcome to Jurassic Park," *The Jurassic Park Official Souvenir Magazine*, (Brooklyn, N.Y.: The Topps Company, Inc., 1993), 2.

8. American Opinion Research poll of 1,000 adults from May 7-24, 1993 cited in *USA Today,* Friday, June 11, 1993, 2A.

9. Graphic inset, "How Real is *Jurassic Park*?," The *Dallas Morning News*, Monday, 14 June 1993, 10D.

10. Begley, "Here Come the DNAsaurs," 60-61.

11. Raul J. Cano, Hendrik N. Poinar, Norman J. Pieniazek, Aftim Acra, and George O. Poinar, Jr. "Amplification and sequencing of DNA from a 120 135-million-year-old weevil," *Nature* 363 (10 June 1993): 536-38.

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Angels: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – The Range of Angelic Activity

Sue Bohlin presents accounts of angelic activity in our world today consistent with the biblical account of angels and their actions. From a biblical worldview perspective, she considers both the involvement of good angels and bad angels in the circumstances of life. A good understanding of angelic activity will aid us in understanding the full world around us, both the seen and the unseen.

This article is also available in Spanish. 

I was about thirteen years old when I had my first encounter with an angel. I was going upstairs to my room, pulling my entire weight on the handrail, when it suddenly came off in my hand. I fell backwards, head first. Halfway into a terrible

fall, I felt a strong hand on my back push me upright. There was nobody there—well, nobody *visible*!

Angel stories are always fascinating, and in this essay I address angels: the good, the bad, and the ugly. The good angels are the holy ones, the bad angels are the evil ones, which the Bible calls demons, and the ugly angels are demons disguising themselves as good angels. These ugly angels have deceived many people in a culture that has embraced "angel mania."

The Good Angels

The book of Hebrews calls angels "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). Angels minister in many ways to us, and I'd like to look at some of their ministries with examples from the scriptures as well as some modern anecdotes.

Provision

The Lord uses His angels to physically provide for His own. It was an angel who brought Elijah bread and water while fleeing from Jezebel after his victory on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 19:5-6).

In 1944, the penniless wife of a pastor and evangelist in Switzerland, Susie Ware prayed, "God, I need five pounds of potatoes, two pounds of pastry flour, apples, pears, a cauliflower, carrots, veal cutlets for Saturday, and beef for Sunday." A few hours later, someone knocked on the door, and there was a young man carrying a basket, who said, "Mrs. Ware, I am bringing what you asked for." It was precisely what she'd prayed for—down to the exact brand of pastry flour she wanted. The young man slipped away, and even though Rev. and Mrs. Ware watched at the window to their building, the man never exited. He just disappeared.{1}

Guidance

Sometimes, angels give guidance so God's people will know what He wants us to do. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and instructed him to take Mary as his wife and to name her baby Jesus. (Matthew 1:20-21)

And it was an angel who told Philip where to go in his travels so that he could meet the Ethiopian eunuch and lead him to Christ. (Acts 8:26)

My friend Lee experienced the comfort of guidance from an angel when the other men in his army unit were pressuring him to visit a red-light district. As he prayed for strength, an invisible messenger came to him and said, quite audibly from about ten feet away, "Have no fear of them. Do not succumb. I will sustain you and deliver you."

Encouragement

Angelic ministry to us can include powerful encouragement. When Paul and his shipmates were caught in a horrible storm and faced shipwreck, an angel appeared to him, assured him that not a life would be lost, and that he would live to stand trial before Caesar. (Acts 27:23)

One mother of a young girl told me that the night after her daughter's cancer surgery, a very tall nurse with long braids, a real Amazon, ministered to her all night long. She was caring for the girl with a strong but gentle tenderness, and talking with the mom about how good God is. After they went home, the mother decided to write a thank-you note to the nurse, and called the hospital to ask for her name. Everyone—even the head of nursing—insisted that there was no nurse with that description working at the hospital. She believes God sent an angel to encourage her through that dark night.

Protection

This world is a dangerous place, and angels can provide supernatural protection. Daniel 6 tells the story of how an angel shut the mouths of the lions when he was thrown into their den.

A young lady named Myra worked in the inner-city ministry of Teen Challenge in Philadelphia. One neighborhood gang liked to terrorize anyone who tried to enter the Teen Challenge building, and they harassed Myra as well. One night, when she was alone in the building with the gang banging on the door, she felt she should continue to try to reach out to them with the gospel of Jesus. As she opened the door, she breathed a prayer for protection. The boys suddenly stopped their shouting, looked at each other, turned and left quietly. Myra had no idea why.

Later on, as the staff people were able to build relationships with the gang members, the ministry director asked them why they dropped their threats against Myra and left her alone that night. One young man spoke up, saying, “We wouldn’t dare touch her after her boyfriend showed up. That dude had to be seven feet tall.” The director said, “I didn’t know Myra had a boyfriend. But at any rate, she was here alone that night.” Another gang member insisted, “No, we saw him. He was right behind her, big as life in his classy white suit.”{2}

Another young woman walking home from work in Brooklyn had to go past a young man loitering against a building. She was fearful; there had been muggings in the area recently, and she prayed for protection. She had to go right by him, and although she could feel him watching her, he didn’t move. A short time after she reached home, she heard sirens and saw police lights. The next day her neighbor told her someone had been raped, in the same place and just after she had passed by the young man.

She wondered if the man she'd passed was the rapist, because if it were, she could identify him. She called the police and discovered they had a suspect in custody. She identified him in a lineup and asked the policeman, "Why didn't he attack *me*? I was just as vulnerable as the next woman who came along." The policeman was curious too, so he described the woman and asked the suspect about her. He said, "I remember her. But why would I have bothered her? She was walking down the street with two big guys, one on either side of her."{3}

Rescue

Sometimes, angels rescue people in danger. It was an angel—if not the Angel of the Lord, who is the pre-incarnate Christ—who joined Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, rescuing them from the flames (Daniel 3).

My friend John told me that he and a friend were walking through a rough neighborhood one night when 12 or 15 gang members jumped them. John took two punches and sank to the ground. He expected to be robbed and severely beaten, but he wasn't. Instead, he heard a voice from about six feet up: "It's okay, they're gone." He looked up and saw his friend who mysteriously was now about 25 feet away, leaning against a wall with his fists still clenched as if he were ready to fight. But there was no gang. They just disappeared. And there was nobody next to John.

Warrior Angels

The ministry of warrior angels catches the imagination in a special way. The prophet Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant so he could see the mighty angelic army of God protecting them.

In Nazi Germany, one mother took her little boy, who was unchurched, to a shelter run by nuns that had become known as a safe place because nothing bad ever seemed to happen there.

His first night, while everyone else was praying that God would protect them, this little boy kept his eyes open. After the "amen," he told his mother, "It came up to here on them!" and pointed to his breastbone. When asked what he meant, he said, "The gutter came up to here on them!" A nurse asked, "What are you talking about?" and he told her that he saw men filled with light guarding each corner of the shelter, so tall that they towered above the roof. The shelter was protected by huge warrior angels that only a little boy could see.{4}

Guardian Angels

Do we have guardian angels? The Bible doesn't give a definitive answer on that, although the Lord Jesus did say, "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10) And Psalm 91:11 promises, "For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways."

One day, when my son was a baby, I tripped while I was holding him, and he went flying headlong toward a brick wall. There was nothing I could do to protect him, but I watched as he inexplicably stopped an inch from the wall and fell gently to the carpet. I knew immediately that an angel's hand had been his bumper pad.

These are only a few of the stories of thousands about angels who protected and rescued people, both Christians and non-Christians. But a nagging question continues to arise: where are the angels when girls are raped, and drunk drivers crash headlong into a car of teenagers, and evil people blow up buildings with hundreds of innocent people in them?

The angels are still there, continuing to minister in pain and death. We usually don't realize the role of angels in the midst of horrible circumstances because their work is unseen and often unfelt.

Behind the question of, “Where are the angels?” is the very difficult problem of why a good God would allow pain and suffering. The book of Job gives us two important insights into the problem of pain: first, when disasters and suffering assail us in the physical realm, there may be something bigger and more important going on in the unseen spiritual realm.{5} Second, God never gives Job an answer to his demand to know the “why”: He just says, “I am the sovereign Lord, acting in ways you cannot understand. You just need to trust Me, that I know what I’m doing.” The fact that God is in control, that He allows all pain and suffering for a reason, is the great comfort that we need to remember when it seems like the angels have forsaken us. They haven’t, because God hasn’t.

The Bad Angels

There are good angels, and there are bad angels. All of them were created as holy angels, but about a third of them rebelled against God and fell from their sinless position. Satan, the leader of these demons or unholy angels, is a liar, a murderer, and a thief. (John 10:10) He hates God and he passionately hates God’s people. The Bible tells us that he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). We need to remember that Satan and all the demons are supernaturally brilliant, and Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

It’s this masquerade as a holy angel that is behind the current angel craze in our culture. While there are a number of wonderful Christian books available that relate stories of holy angels helping people, there are many books, publications, and seminars that are filled with demonic deception of the ugliest kind. Because when you start talking to angels, you end up dealing with demons.

The Ugly Angels

The enemy of our souls is using a new twist on an old lie, exploiting the current interest in angels to attract the untaught and the undiscerning. Much of the current angel mania is simply New Age philosophy, which is actually old-fashioned pantheism. Pantheism is the belief that everything—an impersonal God as well as every part of the creation—is one big unity. All is one, God is one, we are God—and New Age philosophy throws reincarnation into the mix as well.

You know you're around "ugly angels," or demons masquerading as angels of light and holiness, when you see or hear these terms:

1. Contacting or communing with angels.

There are now books available with titles like *Ask Your Angels*{6} and *100 Ways to Attract Angels*{7}. But the Bible gives neither permission nor precedent for contacting angels. When people start calling on angels, it's not the holy angels who answer. They're demons, disguising themselves as good angels to people who don't know how to tell the difference.

2. Loving our angels, praying to our angels.

Some self-styled "angel experts" instruct their followers to love their angels and call upon them for health, healing, prosperity, and guidance. But angels are God's servants, and all this attention and emphasis and glory should go to God, not His servants. God says, "I will not share my glory with another" (Isaiah 42:8). Scripture makes no mention of loving angels—only God, His word, and people. And it never tells us to pray to angels, only to the Lord Himself.

3. Instruction, knowledge, or insight from angels, particularly ones with names.

Some angel teachers are proclaiming that angels are trying

very hard to contact us, so they can give us deeper knowledge of the spiritual{8}. Invariably, this "angel knowledge" is a mixture of truth and lies, and never stands up to the absolute truth of Scripture.

There are four angel names that keep popping up in the angel literature: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael. Michael and Gabriel are the only angels mentioned by name in the Bible. The other two show up in the apocryphal *First Book of Enoch*, which includes a fanciful account of the actions of these four beings. [Note: it has been brought to my attention that there are actually two other named angels in the Bible: Apollyon, the angel of the abyss in Revelation 9:11, and Satan, who is an evil, fallen angel.] Those who report modern day angel teachings are actually channeling information from demons.

4. Special knowledge or teachings from angels.

Naomi Albright distributes teachings about the deep meanings of colors, and numbers and letters of the alphabet which she claims is "knowledge given from above and brought forth in more detail by the High Angelic Master Sheate, Lady Master Cassandra, and Angel Carpelpous, and the Master Angel, One on High."{9} These same beings told Mrs. Albright to stress two main teachings: first, that God accepts all religions, and second, Reincarnation.{10} These two teachings keep showing up in much of the New Age angel literature, which shouldn't be surprising since they are heretical lies that come from the pit of hell, which is where the demons feeding these lies to the teachers are from.

Other angel teachings are that all is a part of God (pantheism); the learner is set apart from others by the "deep" knowledge that the angels give (this is a basic draw to the occult); and that eventually, the one who pursues contact with these angels will be visited by an Ascended Master or a Shining Angel (which is a personal encounter with a demon).

We need to remember that God's angels are not teachers. God's word says they are messengers—that's what "angel" means—and they minister to us. God has revealed to us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), so any hidden knowledge that spirit beings try to impart is by nature occultic and demonic.

5. Human divinity

The message of the ugly angels is that we need to recognize that we are one with the divine, we are divine . . . we are God. In Karen Goldman's *The Angel Book: A Handbook for Aspiring Angels*, she says things like, "Angels don't fall out of the sky; they emerge from within."{11} And, "The whole purpose in life is to know your Angel Self, accept it and be it. In this way we finally experience true oneness."{12}

The following bit of heretical garbage was channeled from a demon posing as an angel named Daephrenocles: "The wondrous light of the Angels, from the elohim to the Archangels to the Devas and Nature Spirits, are all bringing to you the realization that you are magnificent—you are divine now and divine first."{13}

Much of the angel literature refers to "the angel within." But angels are a separate part of the creation. They were created before man as a different kind. They are not within us. The movie "It's a Wonderful Life" notwithstanding, when we hear a bell ring it does not mean that an angel is getting his wings. Nor do good people, especially children, become angels when they die. We remain human beings—not angels, and certainly not God.

What our culture needs in response to the angel craze is strong discernment built on the foundation of God's word. We need to remember, and share with others, three truths about angels:

1. The ministry of holy angels will never contradict the

Bible.

2. The actions of holy angels will always be consistent with the character of Christ.

3. A genuine encounter with a holy angel will glorify God, not the angel. Holy angels never draw attention to themselves. They typically do their work and disappear.

It's very true that many have "entertained angels unaware" (Hebrews 13:2). But we need to make sure we're entertaining the right kind of angels!

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Unity School of Christianity

History

The Unity School of Christianity began as a quest for physical healing by its co-founder, Mary Caroline Page, known as Myrtle, the wife of Charles Fillmore. Even before their marriage in March of 1881 Myrtle had already developed an eclectic theology. Charles had a background in Hinduism, Buddhism, Rosicrucianism, and Theosophy.

They became students of metaphysics and after taking some forty or more courses Myrtle developed what was to become known as Practical Christianity. Myrtle became a practitioner of “mental healing.”

A spiritual breakthrough came for Myrtle in 1886 when she attended a meeting lead by Dr. E.B. Weeks, a noted metaphysician. Dr. Weeks made a statement that would change Myrtle’s understanding of herself and set her on a new course of spiritual development. Myrtle was in a state of mental and physical illness and had come to a point where she was not helped by either medicine or physicians. Dr. Weeks’s statement that day brought her the healing she sought. She cherished each word of the phrase “I am a child of God and therefore I do not inherit sickness.”

Myrtle believed that she had discovered a great “spiritual truth” regarding healing, i.e., by repeating this phrase as a positive affirmation she would be healed. She began to offer her services to others and soon developed a following of those

seeking divine healing.

The Fillmores were students of Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, a mental healer and metaphysician. Myrtle was also a follower of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, who was likewise influenced by Quimby. Unity, therefore, was birthed by the Fillmores, but its roots go back to directly to Mary Baker Eddy and both directly and indirectly to Phineas Quimby.

According to Charles Fillmore the name Unity was adopted in 1895, denoting that Unity was devoted to the spiritualization of all humanity and took the best from all religions. He said the following regarding the eclectic belief system of Unity:

> *We have studied many isms, many cults. People of every religion under the sun claim that we either belong to them or have borrowed the best part of our teaching from them. We have borrowed the best from all religions, that is the reason we are called Unity. . . . Unity is not a sect, not a separation of people into an exclusive group of know-it-alls. Unity is the Truth that is taught in all religions, simplified. . .so that anyone can understand and apply it. Students of Unity do not find it necessary to sever their church affiliations.*

Thus many Christians adopt Unity's teachings and bring those back into their churches, not identifying their "new" teachings as Unity's and thereby compromising the doctrinal integrity of the church.

Unity Doctrine and Theology

God

God is not a personality but a spiritual energy "force" or principle of love. Charles Fillmore in his book, *Jesus Christ Heals*, says that "God is not loving. God is love . . . from which is drawn forth all feeling, sympathy, emotion, and all

that goes to make up the joys of existence."

Fillmore goes on to say, "God does not love anybody or anything. God is the love in everybody and everything. God exercises none of His attributes except through the inner consciousness of the universe and man." In other words, God is not a personal being but an energy or force that expresses itself as a pantheistic love that permeates all things.

H. Emilie Cady attempts to reconcile the seemingly incongruous possibility that God can be both personal and impersonal by her statement:

> *To the individual consciousness God takes on personality, but as the creative underlying cause of all things, He is principle, impersonal; as expressed in each individual, He becomes personal to that one personal, loving, all-forgiving Father-Mother.*

It's obvious that Unity's understanding of who God is has fallen victim to its own syncretism. Unity, while attempting to identify itself as being biblical, has offered too much on the "altar of tolerance" and, thereby, has prostituted itself on the bed of other gods.

Donald Curtis, former minister at Unity Church of Dallas and author of several Unity books, has this to say about God: "Every one of us has planted within him a God-seed, and the business of life is to see that this seed grows, unfolds, and expresses in our world."

Curtis goes on to say, "As this seed unfolds through the development of the Christ consciousness, we fulfill our highest objective in this world."

The ultimate goal of those who follow Unity teaching is to recognize their "oneness" with the "Force," thereby realizing their true self, the God-Self. The god of Unity is an

adaptation of Hindu belief regarding the divine. God is a part of His creation. God is in all things.

Jesus the Christ

Unity also holds an unbiblical view of Jesus. Donald Curtis agrees with Unity theology in that he believes that Jesus the man is fundamentally different from Jesus the Christ. Curtis says, “Christ is the universal principle of love and wisdom. Christ is the only Son of God, but this only Son of God lives in each one of us.”

Curtis makes a primary deviation from biblical understanding in that he holds the position that Jesus is man and that Christ is divine consciousness. He states, “Let us prepare ourself so that the Christ may be born in our own consciousness!” In other words, our spirituality is based on the discovery that the Christ is inherently within each one of us regardless of our personal beliefs or affiliations.

Curtis continues: “When we say ‘Jesus the Christ,’ we must realize that Jesus represents man and Christ represents God in man.” Unity distorts Christ as the Messiah and renders Him as a “universal principle of love” that resides in all of humanity simply waiting to be discovered through self-consciousness.

Unity, along with other New Age belief systems, espouses a mental and spiritual ‘transformation’ that will raise our consciousness. According to Curtis “there are levels of development through which we grow toward full Christ-consciousness when we are truly transformed, fully reborn.”

The pantheistic nature of Unity is expressed in Curtis’ declaration that “we let our self be ruled by the Christ within. We let the Christ teaching unfold in and through us in this great new age. We know that this Christ principle indwells every individual, no matter what his religious beliefs may be. . . . We give thanks for the realization of

the mystical Christ, for the Christ consciousness alive in our life."

Unified Man

According to Donald Curtis, man's primary purpose is to recognize that he is divine. He states: "There is another teaching, however a higher teaching. It is that man has always existed as part of God, and that this God-self, which is the living Essence of everything, individualizes itself in man."

Curtis goes on to say that "within each of us there is a great, wise, and beautiful Being. This is what we really are—the living Essence of everything. We are evolving constantly. We have self- consciousness; now we must develop God-consciousness, a sense of universal unity. And we must endeavor to manifest this God- consciousness in our world to solve our apparent differences through love and understanding."

Unity teaches evolution, both physical and mental or spiritual. It teaches that mankind evolves toward Godhood and that this collective God-consciousness will be man's solution to all his problems. This teaching elevates mankind to divinity, a position that is far from biblical teaching.

In his book *The Way of the Christ*, Curtis says that "man is human, but he is first of all divine." He adds that "as we recognize and identify with the Christ within, we become one with the universal Self-God."

This is nothing more than Hindu philosophy dressed in Western garb: everything is a part of God and God encompasses all that is, whether it be animate or inanimate. This idea, pantheism, is widely held in the East and is being imported to the United States via every means available to man.

Salvation

H. Emilie Cady in her book, *Lessons in Truth*, says that "man originally lived consciously in the spiritual part of himself. He fell by descending in his consciousness to the external or more material part of himself." In other words, the fall of man was from the spiritual realm to the physical and this fall has caused him to suffer spiritual amnesia. Therefore man's dilemma is to reclaim his place in the spiritual realm through right thinking.

Unity teaches that as man discovers his innate divinity he continues to raise his consciousness until he becomes fully God- realized. Once man has achieved this state of understanding he recognizes that he is in perfect oneness with God and is not in need of redemption but that he is indeed the divine.

The unbiblical position regarding salvation held by Unity is clearly seen in the Unity publication, *The Way to Salvation*. This pamphlet states that "Jesus Christ was not meant to be slain as a substitute for man; that is, to atone vicariously for him. Each person must achieve at-one-ment with God, by letting the Christ Spirit within him resurrect his soul into Christ perfection."

Curtis says that "more than ever, we need to become quiet and focus upon the inner. We need to be still and to know that the presence within is God." When one becomes fully aware of this divine presence salvation is realized because the individual no longer has a sense of lostness.

Reincarnation

Unity teaches that the individual lives a number of lifetimes within one existence. Dr. Donald Curtis of the Unity Church of Dallas writes that "it isn't so important that we make it in this particular lifetime, as it is to realize that we do make it, because there is only one lifetime and it goes on

forever."

Article 22 of the Unity Statement of Faith states, "we believe that the dissolution of spirit, soul and body, caused by death, is annulled by rebirth of the same spirit and soul in another body here on earth. We believe the repeated incarnations of man to be a merciful provision of our loving Father to the end that all may have opportunity to attain immortality through regeneration, as did Jesus."

Charles Fillmore rejected the standard understanding of reincarnation as described by the Hindu or the Buddhist. He could not accept their respective teachings regarding the Law of Karma or the Transmigration of the soul. For him reincarnation was a much more simple way for God to offer man a second chance at perfection.

This teaching of reincarnation is perhaps the most destructive of all the false teachings of Unity. The belief in reincarnation undercuts the primary tenets of the gospel. One would have to deny the deity of our Lord, His physical resurrection, and His Second Coming to accept the error of Charles and Myrtle Fillmore.

Reincarnation undercuts Christian doctrine in three ways. First, it assumes that God is impersonal and is therefore unknowable. Second, reincarnation denigrates the Atonement of Christ, and third, it denies the fact that Jesus physically resurrected from the dead. We need to look at each of these more closely.

The Bible does not offer any evidence to support these assumptions. On the contrary, the Bible clearly teaches that God is a personal Being and that He is knowable. Isaiah 43:25 and Jeremiah 31:20 tell us that God remembers; Exodus 3:12 and Matthew 3:17 say that God speaks; Genesis 1:1 and 6:5 along with Exodus 2:24 say that God sees, hears and creates. Elsewhere the Bible tells us that God is a personal Spirit

(John 4:24 and Hebrews 1:3). Since God is a personal Being, He has a will (Matthew 6:10, Hebrews 10:7-9 and 1 John 2:17). Because God has an expressed will, He will also judge His creation (Ezekiel 18:30 and 34:20, and also 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Unity attempts to denigrate the Atonement of Christ in order to build a better case for reincarnation; however, the Atonement delivers man from the cyclical concept of rebirth. Reincarnation does not offer us either peace or hope. The Atonement offers us peace because we do not have to rely on our own righteousness, and it offers us hope because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus has dealt with our sin on the cross and our response is to simply accept His work on our behalf.

Likewise, Unity cannot accept a physical resurrection for our Lord. Unity holds that the disciples expected Jesus to be reincarnated, not resurrected. The biblical claims that Jesus rose physically, appeared to and was recognized by many, was physically touched by some, and ate fish with others are troublesome and must be explained away or spiritualized into meaninglessness if Unity is to seem plausible. (See Luke 24:16 and 31.)

Conclusion

The Unity School of Christianity is recognized as a cult because it exhibits several cultic characteristics. One such characteristic is syncretism. Syncretism is the attempt to combine or reconcile differing beliefs, usually by taking the most attractive features from several sources and combining them into a something new. Unity has taken what some would call “the best qualities” of various religious view points and combined them into a new and more acceptable faith.

Another characteristic of cults that is true of Unity is the denial of the biblical doctrine of salvation by faith in

Christ's person and His finished work on the cross. In Unity, salvation comes by recognizing our inherent divinity and our oneness with God.

Unity is, in my opinion, the most deceptive of the cultic groups that use the word Christian in their name. Unity's distinction is that the follower of its teaching is encouraged to remain in his respective church home whether it be Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, or whatever. The followers of Unity considers their denominational affiliation as a mission field where they can subtly disseminate their ideas.

I recall that when I first became a believer and was attending a Methodist church, there was a particular woman in the church who often greeted me with the phrase, "Greetings to your higher self." It was a peculiar way to greet someone, yet I never asked her what she meant by it. It was several years later when I became a student of the cults that I understood the significance of her greeting. She was a follower of Unity's teachings, that each of us has the divine residing within us and that the higher self is God.

According to Charles Fillmore, Unity is the blending of various religions and belief systems into one unified system of thought. The Fillmores introduced beliefs into their system that had been commonplace in Eastern religions and occult practices.

The Fillmores introduced a pantheistic view of God to their followers and saw God as being both male and female. God is seen as an energy or force that resides in all things both animate and inanimate. Likewise God is seen as being impersonal and a part of His creation.

Jesus is a principle of "love" that brings oneness to all things. This Christ principle is present within each one of us and ultimately unifies us in a salvation experience.

Unity teaches that man's primary problem is that he has

spiritual amnesia and needs to reconnect with his destiny. He needs to regain the realization that he is evolving toward divinity.

Salvation, according to Unity, comes by recognizing one's divine nature. Unity does not recognize the Atonement of Christ but rather seeks what Eastern mystics refer to as at-one-ment or realizing oneness with the divine on a spiritual level.

Since Unity does not recognize the work of Christ on the cross (the Atonement), but rather accepts evolution as a positive ingredient in man's spirituality, it is only logical that they embrace reincarnation as a valid system for spiritual enlightenment. As you can see, then Unity is not based on biblical teaching. To the contrary, it is heavily influenced by Eastern thought and belief. Unity is a classic New Age cult and is not Christian in any aspect of its doctrine or teaching.

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Embraced by the Light of Deception – A Christian

Critique

Former Probe staffer Russ Wise shows that Betty Eadie's best-selling book Embraced by the Light *is a combination of biblical images and spiritual deception.*

The Popularity of Betty Eadie's Book

A growing number of Christians are embracing the light of Betty Eadie, the author of ***Embraced by the Light*****.** Ms. Eadie's book, along with several other new-age bestsellers, are influencing the Christian church in a negative way.

The bestseller, *Embraced by the Light*, is one that needs to be dealt with. It has been on the *New York Times* Bestseller List for over a year now and has sold more than two million copies thus far.

Betty Eadie is a woman on a mission and her mission is to introduce the "Jesus" she met in her near-death experience to as many people as she can. She has been on a variety of national television programs and hundreds of local programs. According to her publicist she has spoken in a significant number of churches, and Christians make up a large portion of those who purchase the book. That is scary.

Ms. Eadie has become somewhat of a guru for many. When she was in Dallas in February, 1994, the *Dallas Morning News* carried a lead story expressing the adoration of her new-found followers. One woman said that Ms. Eadie gave her a kind of inner peace and that without it she would have lost her mind. Another woman said that she cried all the way through the book the first time she read it. A man said that the book validated a lot of things he had believed and that he now looks at things differently.

According to the *Dallas Morning News* article the book's greatest appeal "stems from the description of eternal life, a

comforting notion for people who have survived a loved one or for those pondering their own fate."

The popularity of Betty Eadie and her book *Embraced by the Light* in Christians' lives raises some important questions for us to ask ourselves. Why is her message so readily accepted by Christians? How has the church failed in its mission, thereby creating an atmosphere where such heresy could flourish?

Ms. Eadie says that she was shown in the spirit world that we were with God in the beginning and that we helped him to create the earth. She tells us that Eve's "initiative" made it possible for mankind to have children, that sin is not our true nature, and that we are inherently divine.

She continues by saying that we are all God's children and that we are here on earth to learn the lessons we need for our own spiritual evolution. Our key lesson is to remember our divinity and return to heaven. Eadie embraces the idea that all religions and faiths are equal in God's sight and that they are essential in our development. Likewise, spirits from the other side will also help us learn the lessons of life and aid in our progress.

Ms. Eadie says that death is a spiritual "rebirth" as we simply make a "transition" to another state of being. There will be no judgement day and we will judge ourselves regarding our spiritual evolution.

Mormonism and Magic

She also teaches that we choose the illnesses that we would suffer and that some would choose the illness that would end their lives. She further teaches that hell is not forever and that because of "love," in the end, all will be saved.

Before we can fully understand Ms. Eadie's worldview and theology it is important for us to recognize that she is a Mormon and has been exposed to new age paganism. She has, in

fact, been a member in good standing of the Mormon Church for the past fifteen years or more.

Betty Eadie's background is a mixture of native American Indian spirituality, Catholicism, and Mormonism. Her mother was a full- blooded Sioux Indian and as a young child Betty attended a Catholic boarding school.

This spiritual syncretism helps us recognize the source of her close encounter with "the Light." As we take a closer look at her new-found belief system we are able to not only see Mormon ideas but beliefs that are found in the occult.

On page 57 of her book Betty tells the reader, "within our universe are both positive and negative energies, and both types of energies are essential to creation and growth. These energies have intelligence—they do our will. They are willing servants."

You may remember "The Force" of *Star Wars* and its "light" and "dark" side. The Force was both "good" and "evil." One simply chose which side of "The Force" one wanted to utilize for his evolutionary development. There was no "right" or "wrong" choice; it was a matter of personal preference.

The Force is similar to "magic." In the occult world magic has a "good" side and an "evil" side. It is also considered to have a "light" side and a "dark" side.

Magic is an attempt by man to gain equality with God. To become a part of the creative process. God spoke the universe into existence by His word. The magician, sorcerer, or witch attempts to speak things into existence by words based on their occult knowledge.

The Christian desires to obey the will of God, not to force God to do his bidding. This is the essential difference between occult practice, magic, and Christianity.

Another example of Ms. Eadie's new age belief is the account of her being in a garden while she had her out-of-body experience (OBE). She saw a rose and was struck by its beauty and as she looked at it she felt that she had become "one" with it. She states on page 81 of her book, "I felt God in the plant, in me, his love pouring into us. We were all one!"

"At-one-ment" or the interconnectedness of all things is a primary tenet of new age thought and philosophy. Betty Eadie, through her OBE, experienced the greatest deception Lucifer plays on humanity—that we are a part of the divine, that we are indeed deity. The idea that we are divine beings opens our understanding that we have all that we need "within" us to progress toward our full potential as a god or goddess.

Our "looking" or "going" within is an attempt to discover our inner allies and gain "deep" learning so we further evolve mentally and spiritually. These allies or inner teachers, helpers, or guides are available to all of us, according to the new age mystics.

This inner teacher is also known as the "Higher Self" or the "True Self" and is in constant battle with our cognitive or conscious self. The focus of knowledge is transferred from the objective and cognitive to the subjective and intuitive or experiential. *It is my contention that the greatest danger Betty Eadie represents for the Christian is that Truth is based on or in* experience *rather than the Word of God.*

Betty Eadie's View of Jesus

Ms. Eadie believes that the "Jesus" she met during her OBE was the "real" word of God and not a book that has been corrupted over the millennia. Perhaps some of the most disturbing aspects of her book is what is left out rather than the deception within.

Betty Eadie never mentions the crucifixion or the atonement

for sin. In her worldview they simply are not needed. According to her belief we are at-one with God. Likewise, she never mentions the cross of Christ; evidently her "Jesus" is too positive to mention something as negative as the cross or the need of redemption.

There is no mention of evil or victory over sin. There is no resurrection. Ms. Eadie is almost evangelistic in her declaration that "all religions upon the earth are necessary because there are people who need what they teach. People in one religion may not have a complete understanding of the Lord's gospel and never will have while in that religion." (see Gal. 1:8 and 2 Cor. 11:13 along with Matt. 24:24)

Eadie continues by saying "as an individual raises his level of understanding about God and his own eternal progress, he might feel disconnected with the teachings of his present church and seek a different philosophy or religion to fill that void. When this occurs he has reached another level of understanding and will long for further truth and knowledge."

She says, "Having received this knowledge, I knew that we have no right to criticize any church or religion in any way. They are all precious and important in his sight."

Another concern of Ms. Eadie's is her unbiblical teaching regarding the person of Jesus. On page 44 of her book Ms. Eadie recounts her meeting the Jesus of her out-of-body-experience:

> I understood that he was the Son of God, though he himself was also a God, and that he had chosen from before the creation of the world to be our Savior.

Ms. Eadie's statement regarding the person of Jesus is legitimate with the exception of one word that causes us to think of how the Jehovah Witnesses translate John 1:1. The article "a" becomes very important when it precedes "God." However, for Ms. Eadie the use of the article "a" indicates

that she views Jesus as another distinct deity rather than the second person of a triune god—thereby exposing her Mormon understanding of the trinity. The Mormons believe in three separate beings who are each divine rather than three persons comprising one God as the Bible indicates.

The Bible is explicit in its affirmation of the Trinity. Deuteronomy 6:4 is clear in its declaration of one God. Elsewhere in Scripture we see God the Father (Matthew 6:9), God the Son (John 1:1), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) as three distinct Persons who are equal in every aspect of their being.

In John 10:30 Jesus says that He is one with the Father, thereby leaving no doubt of their oneness regarding their essence and that they are not two separate beings or gods as Ms. Eadie would have us believe. Ms. Eadie refers to "the Spirit of God," although she does not mention the Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity by name. The Bible, likewise, is clear regarding the stature of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 the Holy Spirit is seen as the enabler in helping God's people understand divine truth.

Betty Eadie's view of Jesus comes into focus once Biblical light is shed upon it. It becomes perfectly clear that she does not hold a trinitarian view of God.

Deception of New Age Religion

The unsettling message that Betty Eadie offers in her book is that we are not sinners needing redemption, but that we are spiritual beings who have lost our way. We have forgotten our divinity. Spiritual growth is a progressive process toward self-realization and at-one-ment.

The new-age worldview of Betty Eadie is evident:

- All is One
- All is God

- Man is God
- All is changing
- Man is changing
- All is relative
- Self is the Judge
- The gospel is unnecessary

Ms. Eadie sounds like Shirley MacLaine, the popular new age entertainer and author, when she says that her prior existence "had been purposely blocked from me by a 'veil' of forgetfulness at my birth." Ms. MacLaine had previously made the same statement in her popular book *Out on a Limb*.

In other words, we were with our heavenly Father in the spirit world and eventually came to the point where we were spiritually dry and realized that the only way to get beyond our dryness was to jump start our spirituality. Thereby, we chose to leave our heavenly home and incarnate on this earth where we might further develop our spiritual essence and advance our possibilities in the spirit world.

Ms. Eadie states that prior to our leaving our spiritual home and incarnating in this world we perfected a plan for growth before we took on this physical shell. She says on page 47 of her book that "the Father explained that coming to earth for a time would further our spiritual growth. Each spirit who was to come to earth assisted in planning the conditions on earth, including the laws of mortality which would govern us."

In the spirit world Ms. Eadie was told "that we had all desired to come here, that we had actually chosen many of our weaknesses and difficult situations in our lives so that we could grow." She continues by saying, "to my surprise I saw that most of us had selected the illnesses we would suffer, and for some, the illness that would end our lives . . . we were very willing, even anxious, as spirits to accept all of our ailments, illnesses, and accidents here to help better ourselves spiritually."

According to Betty Eadie we are basically good. On page 49 of her book Ms. Eadie says “that sin is not our true nature. Spiritually, we are at various degrees of light—which is knowledge—and because of our divine spiritual nature we are filled with the desire to do good.” She continues by saying “that there is a vital, dynamic link between the spirit world and mortality, and that we need the spirits on the other side for our progression.”

In the above statement Ms. Eadie is allowing her god’s eclectic worldview show. The idea that man is basically “good” is commonly held in the field of humanistic psychology rather than in Christian Scripture. The Bible indicates that man is in need of redemption and forgiveness. Her belief that we, in the mortal world, are in need of the spirits from the other side to aid us in our spiritual progression is taken directly from her Mormon background. We find this teaching in the Doctrine and Covenants (128:15), one of the Standard Works of the Mormon Church.

The Biblical indication is that in the last days many will be deceived. The gospel writer of Matthew seems to agree. Not only will unbelievers be deceived but also those who have trusted Jesus for their salvation may be equally deceived. The Scripture says, “For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:36) The problem that many have in our day is that they seek “signs” and “wonders” rather than Jesus. Experience has become their teacher rather than the Word. Our response is simply, Jesus—the only begotten Son of God. There is salvation in no other. Our hope is not in our experiences, but in a person.

Testing the Book by The Bible

Betty Eadie exposes more of her Mormon worldview with her belief in a pre-mortal existence. When Ms. Eadie first speaks of “Jesus” in her book she said “I knew that I had known him

from the beginning, from long before my earth life, because my spirit remembered him." Another example of her "new found" belief in a pre-existence was when "Jesus" allowed her to recall her feelings when creation occurred. She says that "all people as spirits in the pre-mortal world took part in the creation of the earth."

Ms. Eadie offers another example. She relates an experience during her heavenly visitation where she "traveled to many other worlds—earths like our own but more glorious, and always filled with loving, intelligent people." She continues by saying, "I knew that I had been to these places before." She had an experience that she could not deny.

Some have said that a man with an argument is always at the mercy of a man with an experience. A growing problem in our society is the willingness to accept one's experience over the protestation of the facts. As Christians we need to be careful that we do not fall into this trap. Our responsibility is to consider the Word of God and allow **it** to validate the experience or not. We must be extremely careful not to allow our or anyone else's experience to mold our belief system.

Another example of Ms. Eadie's pre-mortal experience was an encounter with those in the spirit world. She said, "I saw again the spirits who had not yet come to earth, and I saw some of them hovering over people in mortality. I saw one male spirit trying to get a mortal man and woman together on earth—his future parents." (I had a brief moment of *deja vu* and thought of Marty McFly in *Back to the Future*).

A growing number of Christians are accepting Ms. Eadie's account of the after-life, and the church is allowing her beliefs to take root by their lack of biblical teaching. The Bible is very clear regarding the individual's moment of existence (Psalm 139:13-16). Nowhere in Scripture does our Lord offer a possibility that we pre-existed with Him in the spirit world. The burden of proof is on the one with the

experience and not the objective Word of God.

What can we learn from Betty Eadie and her near-death experience? First and foremost is that near-death experiences tend to alter one's worldview. Raymond Moody in his book *The Light Beyond* offers evidence for such a concern. He states that those who experience a near-death episode

> …emerge with an appreciation of religion that is different from the narrowly defined one established by most churches. They come to realize through this experience that religion is not a matter of one 'right' group versus several 'wrong' groups. People who undergo an NDE come out of it saying that religion concerns your ability to love—not doctrine and denominations. In short, they think that God is a much more magnanimous being than they previously thought, and that denominations don't count.

This idea, that doctrine is of no importance but we should only be concerned about love, is parallel to the teachings found in the New Age worldview. Ms. Eadie is in agreement with Dr. Moody's statement that "love" is our ultimate goal and that religion is simply a vehicle to get us to the party. It makes little or no difference whether we get there in a Ford or a Chevrolet. As warm and cozy as this idea sounds, it does not take into account the words of our Lord in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus was very clear that He wasn't offering one of many ways, but that He was **The** Way and **The** Truth. He was very confident that salvation was found in no other.

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Education and New Age Humanism

The Humanistic Charade

Most religions consist of a unified system of beliefs that deals with basic views on such things as God and human ethics. The two basic elements in all religions are: (1) a view of God or some ultimate reality, and (2) a view of ethics, derived from ultimate reality. Most often these are expressed in some kind of holy book. Each major religion has a holy book or books. Christianity is no exception. Humanism, as well, has its holy books: *The Humanist Manifestos I and II.*

The manifesto itself regards humanism as a religion. The very first sentence reads: "Humanism is a philosophical, religious and moral point of view as old as human civilization itself."(1) So, humanism not only has its "holy books," but has a view of God as well: It says there is no God.

The second *Humanist Manifesto*, published in 1973 states; "As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.

"Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful, diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival."(2)

The manifesto goes on to say, "We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As nontheists, we begin with

humans not God, nature not deity."(3)

The *Humanist Manifesto* goes on to state, "we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."(4)

Regarding the individual, the *Manifesto* says that "in the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults."(5)

And humanism has a firm position on ethics. Their "bible" says, "Moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational."(6)

In other words, morals are not derived from absolutes given by God, but are determined by the individual from situation to situation. By and large, the humanists deplore any reference to them as being "religious." However, the Supreme Court identified secular humanism as a religion on at least two occasions: *Abington v. Schempp* and *Torcaso v. Watkins*.

In Torcaso the court spelled out that "religion" in the constitutional sense includes non-theistic, as well as theistic religion and the state is therefore forbidden to prohibit or promote either form of religion.(7)

The concern I have is not whether "humanism" is recognized as a religion by the humanists themselves or not. It is that those who shape the young minds of America are humanists and in most cases they are not willing to be honest about it.

The Great Brain Robbery

Humanism is the dominant view among leading educators in the U.S. They set the trends of modern education, develop the curriculum, dispense federal monies, and advise government officials on educational needs. In short, they hold the future in their hands. As Christian taxpayers we are paying for the overthrow of our own position.

Charles Francis Potter, an original signer of the first Humanist Manifesto and honorary president of the National Education Association, has this to say about public school education:

> *Education is thus a most powerful ally of Humanism, and every American public school is a school of Humanism.(8)*

Not only are the leading educators of America promoting humanism, but so are those who write the textbooks children use in the classroom.

A sociology textbook dealing with ethics states: “There are exceptions to almost all moral laws, depending on the situation. What is wrong in one instance may be right in another. Most children learn that it is wrong to lie. But later they may learn that it is tactless, if not actually wrong, not to lie under certain circumstances.”(9)

To show how this is coming about, we will go first to the basic issue the change in the philosophy of education. We will then examine some of the fruit the specific programs carrying the humanist message into the classrooms. Finally, we will examine the attitude of those in educational leadership who are trying to promote humanism in the schools, whether it be secular or cosmic in nature.

Educational Philosophy

Most of us have thought that the schools' basic responsibility is to teach what is known as the three "R's": reading, writing and arithmetic. But the fact that many students today cannot pass basic aptitude tests indicate the failure of the public schools in teaching the three "R's."

A recent *Time* magazine essay stated that "a standardized math test was given to 13-year-olds in six countries last year," and that the "Koreans did the best. Americans did the worst." Besides being shown triangles and equations, the kids were shown the statement "I am good at mathematics." Koreans were least likely to agree with this statement, while Americans were most likely to agree, with 68 percent in agreement.(10)

The conclusion one might make regarding these informative results is that American school children are not very good at math, but they feel good about it.

Today leading educators no longer see their job primarily to be the teaching of these necessary skills. The philosophy of education has undergone a fundamental change. Educators now perceive their jobs to be the complete "resocialization" of the child—the complete reshaping of his values, beliefs and morals.

Teaching is now being viewed as a form of therapy, the classroom as a clinic, and the teacher as a therapist whose job it is to apply psychological techniques in the shaping of the child's personality and values.

Teacher as Therapist

S. I. Hayakawa, U. S. Senator from California, was an educator for most of his life. On the floor of the U. S. Senate, he stated:

> *In recent years in colleges of education and schools of*

> *sociology and psychology, an educational heresy has flourished . . . The heresy of which I speak regards the fundamental task of education as therapy.(11)*

The National Education Association report, "Education for the 70's," states clearly that "schools will become clinics whose purpose is to provide individualized psycho-social treatment for the student, and teachers must become psycho-social therapists."(12)

The February 1968 issue of the National Education Journal states:

> *The most controversial issue of the 21st Century will pertain to the ends and means of human behavior and who will determine them. The first education question will not be `What knowledge is of the most worth?' but `What kind of human behavior do we wish to produce?'(13)*

Who will determine human behavior, and what kind of behavior do we want? Who will engineer society, and what kind of society shall we design? These are the tasks the educational leaders have set for themselves. They are not thinking small.

Catherine Barrett, a former president of the NEA, said:

> *We will need to recognize that the so-called basic skills, which represent nearly the total effort in elementary schools, will be taught in 1/4 of the present school day. The remaining time will be devoted to what is truly fundamental and basic.(14)*

Barrett wishes to press on to bigger and more significant things, such as redesigning society by reshaping our children's values. Educational leaders are saying the big question in education is: What human behavior do we want, and who will produce it?

The question we need to ask is: By what pattern do these educators propose to reconstruct society, and whose values will be taught? You can believe that it will not be the Judeo-Christian value system.

What are the basic programs carrying the humanist message into the classroom? Senator Hayakawa mentions psychodrama, role playing, touch therapy and encounter groups. Others are: values clarification, situation ethics, sensitivity training, survival training and other behavior-oriented programs. Meditation, visualization, guided imagery, along with self-esteem teaching, represent intuitive learning that has become known as "affective education."

Dr. William Coulson of the Western Sciences Institute indicated that affective learning, self-actualization, is at the root of our nation's illiteracy.(15)

These programs are designed to modify children's attitudes, values and beliefs. The primary problem is not the teaching of values, but the fact that these new programs are designed to "free" the children from the Judeo-Christian value system taught by parents and church.

These programs cover such topics as sex education, death ed, drug and alcohol education, family life, human development and personality adjustment. The teaching today by humanists is void of absolutes; there is not a basis of discerning right and wrong. The only wrong is having or holding an absolute.

Relativism is the Key

The only basis for developing morals is what the child himself wants or thinks, and /or what the peer group decides is right. Strong convictions of right and wrong are looked upon as evidence of poor social adjustment and of need for the teachers' therapy. The bottom line is this the major consensus determines what is right or wrong at any point in our culture,

there are no absolutes.

Sheila Schwartz is a member of the American Humanist Association, and her article “Adolescent Literature: Humanism Is Alive and Thriving in the Secondary School” appeared in the January/February 1976 edition of The Humanist. In regard to the impact of secular humanist thought in education, she makes the following statements:

> *Something wonderful, free, unheralded, and of significance to all humanists is happening in the secondary schools. It is the adolescent-literature movement. They may burn Slaughterhouse Five in North Dakota and ban a number of innocuous books in Kanawha County, but thank God [sic] the crazies don’t do all that much reading. If they did they’d find that they have already been defeated. . . Nothing that is part of contemporary life is taboo in this genre and any valid piece of writing that helps make the world more knowable to young people serves an important humanistic function.(16)*

Lastly, what are the basic attitudes of the educational leadership in America?

Sidney Simon is one of the educational elite in the U.S. He is a humanist, teaches at the Center for Humanistic Education in Amherst, Massachusetts, and is one of the main architects of values clarification theory, which is widely used in public schools. Mr. Simon is a professor. He teaches those who will later teach your children and mine in the public school. While Mr. Simon was teaching at Temple University in Philadelphia, he commented on his experience teaching high school students:

> *I always bootlegged the values stuff. I was assigned to teach social studies in elementary school and I taught values clarification. I was assigned current trends in American education and I taught my trend.(17)*

Simon goes on to say, “Keep it subtle, keep it quiet, or the parents will really get upset.”(18)

Rhoda Lorand, a member of the American Board of Professional Psychology, made some observations about the attitudes of educators before the U.S. House Sub-Committee on Education. Her testimony related to House Resolution 5163 having to do with education. Her words are as follows:

> *The contempt for parents is so shockingly apparent in many of the courses funded under Title III, in which the teacher is required to become an instant psychiatrist who probes the psyche of her pupils, while encouraging them to criticize their parents’ beliefs, values and teachings. This process continues from kindergarten through the twelfth grade.(19)*

As parents, we are expected to fund the very teaching methodology that is designed to destroy our influence upon our children.

The New Age Seduction

However, the humanist perspective on education is not the only threat we face today. The humanists became entrenched in the late 1960s and during the 1970s.

During the decade of the eighties and now in the nineties we have a new threat. Those who have bought into the New Age movement have a goal to influence the young as well. The January/February 1983 issue of The Humanist carried this article titled “A Religion for a New Age.” The author stated:

> *I am convinced that the battle for humankind’s future must be waged and won in the public school classroom by teachers who correctly perceive their role as the proselytizers of a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being. These teachers must embody the same selfless*

> *dedication as the most rabid fundamentalist preachers, for they will be ministers of another sort, utilizing a classroom instead of a pulpit to convey humanist values in whatever subject they teach, regardless of the educational level preschool day care or large state university.(20)*

The main thrust of this new threat is eastern in philosophy and origin. Humanism as a religion represents a real threat to our Christian heritage, but eastern philosophical ideas by comparison are deadly to our way of life.

Instructor magazine, a publication for teachers, carried an article entitled "Your Kids are Psychic! But they may never know it without your help." The article says that "teachers in particular are in a position to play an exciting role in the psychic development of children."(21) The article goes on to identify psychic ability as the practice of telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition and retrocognition.

As teachers continue their path toward enlightenment of their students, they may step into the world of "confluent education." Dr. Beverly Galyean describes confluent education as a "wholistic" approach to learning. The basic premises of "confluent education" should cause great concern within the Christian community.

Among Dr. Galyean's premises are:

> *In essence we are not individuals but part of the universal consciousness [which is God]. Realizing this essential unity, and experiencing oneself as part of it, is a major goal for a child's education.*

> *Because each person is part of the universal consciousness which is love, each contains all the wisdom and love of the universe. This wisdom and love is the `higher self.' The child can tap into this universal mind and receive advice,*

> *information and help from it. This is usually done through meditation and contact with spirit guides.*
>
> *Each person creates his or her own reality by choosing what to perceive and how to perceive it. As we teach children to focus on positive thoughts and feelings of love, their reality will become that.(22)*

Dr. Galyean sums up her beliefs by saying that

> *Once we begin to see that we are all God . . . the whole purpose of life is to reown the Godlikeness within us; the perfect love, the perfect wisdom, the perfect understanding, the perfect intelligence, and when we do that we create back to that old, that essential oneness which is consciousness. So my whole view is very much based on that idea.(23)*

As Christians our response to New Age influences in public school education can be carried out in several ways.

First, we must develop a relationship with the school. One possibility might be through actively working as a volunteer on campus in some capacity. Another is getting to know your child's teacher and his or her worldview.

Second, we must discern he particular bias of the textbooks used in the classroom. Whether they are humanistic in their approach or eastern and whether they properly treat the Judeo-Christian world view.

Third, if we discover that our Judeo-Christian perspectives are being sacrificed for the inclusion of alternative views, then we must become politically involved and seek the election of individuals to the school board and other effective positions who reflect a more traditional stance.

Fourth, we must continue to be actively involved in our

children’s lives. Furthermore, we must teach our children to become discriminators. We cannot ever accept the idea that our child’s education is someone else’s responsibility.

It is imperative that we educate others as to the problems within the system and then take appropriate action.

As Christians, our response to New Age influences in public school education can be carried out by developing a relationship with the school and getting to know our children’s teacher and his or her particular worldview.

We must also be aware of the bias represented in our children’s textbooks. However, more importantly, we must develop a deeper relationship with our children, thereby becoming the greatest of all the various influences in their young lives. Unless we achieve this goal, we will have emotionally and spiritually lost the battle for our children’s future.

Notes

1. Paul Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto I* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1979), 9.

2. Paul Kurtz, Edwin H. Wilson, *Humanist Manifesto II* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1979), 13.

3. Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto II*, 16.

4. Kurtz, *Humanist Manifesto II*, 17.

5. *Torcaso v. Watkins*, 367 US 488, 1961, 495n.

6. Virginia Armstrong, *Humanism in American Education I*, (Blackstone Institute of Public Law and Policy).

7. Helen M. Hughes, *Inquiries in Sociology* (Newton, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1972), 37.

8. Charles Krauthammer, “Education: Doing Bad and Feeling Good,” *Time*, 5 February 1990, 78.

9. Address to the U.S. Senate, U.S. Department of Education Hearing, March 1984.

10. “Education for the 70’s,” National Education Report.

11. National Education Journal, (Feb. 1968).

12. Timothy D. Crater, “The Unproclaimed Priests of Public Education,” *Christianity Today*, 10 April 1981, 45.

13. William R. Coulson, “Memorandum to Federal Drug Education Panel,” 23 April 1988, Program Newsletter (La Jolla, Calif.: May 1988).

14. Sheila Schwartz, “Adolescent Literature: Humanism is Alive and Thriving in the Secondary School,” The Humanist, Jan. Feb. 1976.

15. Crater, “Unproclaimed Priests,” 46.

16. Ibid., 47.

17. Ibid.

18. John Dunphy, “A Religion for a New Age,” *The Humanist*, Jan. Feb. 1983, 26.

19. Alex Tanous and Katherine Fair Donnelly, “Your Kids Are Psychic!,” *Instructor Magazine*, April 1980, 65.

20. Frances Adeney, “Some Schools Are Looking East for Answers,” *Moody Monthly*, May 1982, 19.

21. Ibid.

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Hinduism: A Christian Perspective

Rick Rood gives us an understanding of this major world religion which is becoming more a part of the American scene with the growth of a Hindu immigrant population. Taking a biblical worldview perspective, he highlights the major differences between Hinduism and Christianity.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Though Hinduism may seem far removed from our everyday experience, it's becoming increasingly important that we as Christians understand this mysterious religion from India. This is so, if for no other reason than that Hinduism claims 1/6 of the world's population, with over 750 million followers worldwide. But it's also important because its influence is being felt more and more in our own country.

Most of us have had at least some exposure to what has become known as the New Age movement. If so, we have probably realized that Hinduism is the wellspring of a good deal of New Age thinking. Most of us are probably also aware than an increasing number of Asian Indians are residing in the U.S. We may be surprised, in fact, to learn that there are approximately 200 Hindu temples or Hindu centers in the U.S. Many believe that due to its eclectic nature, Hinduism has the potential to serve as a major vehicle for uniting much of the non-Christian religious world.

The appeal of Hinduism to Western culture is not difficult to

comprehend. For one, Hinduism is comfortable with evolutionary thinking. As modern science emphasizes our physical evolution, so Hinduism emphasizes our spiritual evolution. As much of modern psychology emphasizes the basic goodness and unlimited potential of human nature, so Hinduism emphasizes man's essential divinity. As modern philosophy emphasizes the relativity of all truth claims, so Hinduism tolerates many seemingly contradictory religious beliefs. As a religion that also emphasizes the primacy of the spiritual over material reality, Hinduism appeals to many who are disillusioned with strictly material pursuits.

Though there are some core beliefs common to virtually all Hindus, there really is no "Hindu orthodoxy"—no hard and fast dogma that all Hindus must believe. It's actually a family of gradually developing beliefs and practices.

Hinduism has its roots in the interrelationship of two basic religious systems: that of the ancient civilization residing in the Indus River Valley from the third millennium B.C., and the religious beliefs brought to India by the Aryan people (possibly from the Baltic region) who began infiltrating the Indus Valley sometime after 2000 B.C.

The religion of the Aryans is described in the writings of "holy men" contained in the Vedas (meaning "knowledge" or "wisdom"). The Vedas are four collections of writings composed between about 1500 and 500 B.C., which form the basis for Hindu beliefs, and which reveal a gradual development of religious ideas. The later sections of the Vedas are known as the Upanishads. These Vedic writings are considered inspired. Later Hindu writings, including the renowned Bhagavad Gita, are of lesser authority, but widely popular.

Hindu Beliefs About God And the World

An understanding of the Hindu beliefs about God is important even if we don't know any Hindus or people from India because

we are all in contact with the New Age movement, and it draws its ideas about God from Hinduism. What then do Hindus believe about God?

The early portions of the Hindu scriptures known as the Vedas describe a number of deities who for the most part are personifications of natural phenomena, such as storms and fire. Prayers and sacrifices were offered to these gods. An extensive system of priestly rituals and sacrifices was eventually developed which served as means of obtaining the blessing of these gods.

The later portions of the Vedas, called the Upanishads, reflect a significant development in Hinduism's concept of the divine. Many of the Upanishads, instead of speaking of a multitude of gods, refer to an ultimate reality beyond our comprehension called Brahman. Though Brahman is impersonal in nature, it is sometimes referred to in personal terms by the name Isvara.

Along with this idea of a single divine reality, the Upanishads also teach that at the core of our being (referred to as "Atman") we are identical with this ultimate reality.

A popular saying in Hinduism is "Atman is Brahman!" In fact, all living things are Brahman at their innermost core! In addition, instead of ritual sacrifice, intuitive knowledge of the oneness of all things came to be endorsed as the way of contact with divine reality. Also found in the Upanishads is the teaching that the material world (including our conscious personalities) is less than fully real. The word "maya" is used to designate the power by which God, or ultimate reality, brought this less than real world into existence.

Though this monistic or pantheistic philosophy provided a comprehensive intellectual understanding of the divine reality for Hindus, it lacked a strong appeal to the heart. As a result, just before the dawn of the Christian era, a great

transformation occurred in Hinduism, spurred particularly by the writing of the Bhagavad Gita, the "New Testament" of Hinduism. The Gita records a conversation between the warrior-prince Arjuna and his charioteer Krishna (who is unveiled as an incarnation of the god Vishnu), in which personal devotion to deity is endorsed as a way of salvation for all classes of people.

From this time forward, these two major streams of Hindu thought and practice grew and developed—the more intellectual and philosophical stream that emphasized the oneness of all things, and the stream that emphasized personal devotion to a god. The latter stream has predominated among the common people of India to this present day. Chief among the gods so venerated are Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). In India there are many temples devoted to Shiva (or to one of his "wives," such as Kali), or to Vishnu (or to one of his ten incarnations known as avatars). All in all, it is often stated that Hinduism claims 330 million gods and goddesses!

One might wonder how such a multitude of beliefs about the divine could possibly co-exist in one religion. But they do. There is, however, a widespread recognition that none of the personal gods of Hinduism is in any way exclusive or unique. They are all simply different ways of conceiving of the one reality behind all things—Brahman.

Foundational Hindu Beliefs

Next we must turn our attention to two core beliefs of Hindus: (a) what they believe about the source of evil and suffering and (b) what they believe about life after death.

The first of these core beliefs is the doctrine of *karma*. The word karma means "action." But the religious concept has more to do with the results or consequences of actions. The doctrine of karma states that every thought and action results

in certain consequences born by the actor or thinker. If a person lies or steals, he will be wronged in some way in the future. Hindus believe that all suffering is due to one's own past actions, in this or in a previous life. Some believe that karma implies strict determinism or fatalism (that one must simply resign himself to living out his karma). Most, however, believe that though our present is determined by our past, nonetheless we can influence our future by conducting ourselves in a proper manner in the present.

Some have equated the doctrine of karma with the statement in Galatians 6:7 that "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." It is certainly a biblical teaching that our actions have consequences—for good or ill. But this is not the same as believing that every experience in life is a consequence of one's own past actions. This is definitely not a biblical idea.

The second core belief of Hinduism is the doctrine of reincarnation, or transmigration of souls, called *samsara*. Since it is impossible that all of one's karma be experienced in one lifetime, the Hindu scriptures state that after death individual souls are "reborn" in this world, in another body—human or otherwise. The nature of one's rebirth is determined by the karma resulting from past actions.

Closely associated with the doctrine of reincarnation is that of *ahimsa* or non-injury to living things. This is the core moral value of Hinduism, the protection of all life (which is ultimately divine), and is the main reason why some Hindus are vegetarian.

Also associated with reincarnation is the *caste system*. According to Hindu teaching, there are four basic castes or social classes (and thousands of sub-groups within the castes). Each has its own rules and obligations pertaining to nearly every facet of life. At the top are the Brahmins or priests. Second in rank are the Kshatriyas or warriors and

rulers. Third are the Vaisyas or merchants and farmers. Below these are the Shudras or laboring class. Salvation is possible only for the top three castes, who are called the "twice born." Outside the caste system are the untouchables or outcastes. Though outlawed in India in the late 1940s, many in the countryside are still considered outcastes.

One's caste is determined at birth by his or her own personal karma. Attempts, therefore, to bring about social change or to improve one's social position would appear to run contrary to the law of karma and the caste system.

It's little wonder that the chief aim of the Hindu is to experience release or liberation from this cycle of death and rebirth caused by karma. Hindus call this liberation *moksha*.

Hindu Ways Of Salvation

Why do New Agers practice yoga? Why are they so devoted to meditation? It may come as some surprise that these practices are central to the Hindu search for salvation!

We noted earlier that the chief aim in Hinduism is to gain release from the cycle of reincarnation caused by karma—the consequences of past actions, in this or in previous lives! Now we want to look at the primary ways in which followers of Hinduism seek to achieve this salvation—liberation from earthly existence.

Before discussing the three primary ways of salvation in Hinduism, we must mention the four goals of life permissible to Hindus. Hinduism recognizes that in the course of many lifetimes people may legitimately give themselves to any of these goals. The first is the goal of pleasure or enjoyment, particularly through love and sexual desire. This is called *kama*. The second legitimate aim in life is for wealth and success. This is called *artha*. The third aim in life is moral duty or *dharma*. One who gives himself to dharma renounces

personal pleasure and power, to seek the common good. The final aim in life, however, is *moksha*—liberation from the cycle of lives in this material world, and entrance into Nirvana.

Hindus recognize three possible paths to moksha, or salvation. The first is the way of works or *karma yoga*. This is a very popular way of salvation and lays emphasis on the idea that liberation may be obtained by fulfilling one's familial and social duties thereby overcoming the weight of bad karma one has accrued. The Code of Manu lists many of these rules. Most important among them are certain rituals conducted at various stages of life.

The second way of salvation is the way of knowledge or *jnana yoga*. The basic premise of the way of knowledge is that the cause of our bondage to the cycle of rebirths in this world is ignorance or *avidya*. According to the predominant view among those committed to this way, our ignorance consists of the mistaken belief that we are individual selves and not one with the ultimate divine reality called Brahman. It is this ignorance that gives rise to our bad actions which result in bad karma. Salvation is achieved through attaining a state of consciousness in which we realize our identity with Brahman. This is achieved through deep meditation, often as a part of the discipline of yoga.

The third and final way of salvation is the way of devotion or *bhakti yoga*. This is the way most favored by the common people of India; it satisfies the longing for a more emotional and personal approach to religion. It is self-surrender to one of the many personal gods and goddesses of Hinduism. Such devotion is expressed through acts of worship, *puja,* at the temple, in the home, through participation in the many festivals in honor of such gods, and through pilgrimages to one of the numerous holy sites in India. In the way of devotion, the focus is one obtaining the mercy and help of a god in finding release from the cycle of reincarnation. Some

Hindus conceive of ultimate salvation as absorption into the one divine reality, with all loss of individual existence. Others conceive of it as heavenly existence in adoration of the personal God.

A Christian Response to Hinduism

The editor of the periodical *Hinduism Today* said not long ago that a "small army of yoga missionaries" has been trained to "set upon the Western world." And in his own words, "They may not call themselves Hindu, but Hindus know where yoga came from and where it goes."

What should be the appropriate Christian perspective on this religion of the East that is making such an impact in the West? At the outset we must say that as Christians we concur with Hindus on a couple of points. Hindus are correct in their recognition that all is not right with the world and with human existence in it. They are correct as well in suggesting that the ultimate remedy to the human dilemma is spiritual in nature. Beyond these two points, however, there's little common ground between Hinduism and Christianity. Let's note just a few of the more important areas of divergence.

First, Hinduism lacks any understanding that God created this world for a good purpose. It is common for Hindus to speak of God bringing the universe into existence simply as a "playful" exercise of His power. Also lacking is a conception of God as infinitely holy and righteous and as the One to whom we as His creatures are accountable for the way we conduct our lives.

The second major area of contrast between Hinduism and Christianity is the conception of human nature and of the source of our estrangement from God. According to Hindu teaching, man is divine at the core of his being. He is one with God! The problem is that man is ignorant of this fact. He is deceived by his focus on this temporal and material world, and this ignorance gives rise to acts that result in bad karma

and traps us in the cycle of reincarnation.

According to the biblical teaching, however, the source of our alienation from God (and ultimately of all that is imperfect in this world), is not ignorance of our divinity, but our sinful rebellion against God and His purpose for our lives.

This leads to the third and final point of contrast—the way of salvation. According to most Hindu teaching, salvation from the cycle of reincarnation is achieved by our own efforts—whether through good works, meditation, or devotion to a deity. According to the Bible, however, our spiritual need is for deliverance from God's judgment on our sin and for restoration to a life under His direction and care. This salvation can be provided only by God's gracious and undeserved action in our behalf.

It is true that in certain Hindu groups there is a similar emphasis on God's grace (probably as a result of past Christian influence). But even here, there is a major distinction. The Hindu teaching about grace sees no need for an atonement for sin, but simply offers forgiveness without any satisfaction of the judgment on sin required by a holy God.

In contrast, the Christian gospel is this: God the Son became a man, died a sacrificial death on the cross, making real forgiveness of real sins against the real God possible to those who place complete trust in Christ. All who do so can experience true forgiveness, know God and His purpose for their lives, and have the certainty of eternal life with Him!

For a list of resources on Hinduism, and on sharing the gospel with our Hindu friends, contact us here at Probe!

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