

Challenging the Cults

10. Answering the New Age



Tarot Cards, The Ouija Board and Astrology are Old Age Products packaged for a New Age

How should Christians respond to the New Age movement? As the “New Age” becomes more popular, Christians find themselves in a quandary, do they respond or keep quiet. Sorcery, wizardry and channeling are marketed to kids and adults alike. “Harry Potter” exposes children to the “Good” in sorcery and witchcraft. McDonalds kids meals based on a movie about “Haunted Houses”. Many, including Christians might dismiss these concerns as being extreme. Television programs such as John Edwards’ show “Crossing Over”, with Edwards channeling communication between living and dead family makes channeling mainstream. There is even a psychic pets program where a psychic communicates between pets and owners on the cable network, Animal Planet.

According to George Barnia, 20% of the population believes in some aspect of the New Age. This will grow as the New Age becomes more acceptable with many searching youths. Most of the people who are in the New Age are from a nominal, liberal Christian or un-churched backgrounds. Unlike other cults such as Islam, Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons the New Age does not have one sole source of doctrine. Nevertheless, is a

collection of similar ideas and thoughts combining Hinduism, Gnostics, and Pagan religious ideas into a collective body, known as the New Age. The way to help New Agers come to a relationship with Christ varies from other cults.

Strategy to reach the New Age

To reach those involved in the New Age, we need to recognize at what level we are operating. The books of Ephesians and Corinthians spread light on the situation.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
Ephesians 6:12

20 Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.

21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons¹; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

I Corinthians 10:20-21

Several points come to light in these scriptures in dealing with the New Age.

From Ephesians we learn:

- The battle is spiritual not physical
- The spiritual realm is organized opposition
- The spiritual realm has specific demonic forces leading the war.

From I Corinthians we learn:

¹ Demons: δαιμόνιον *Daimonion* (dahee-mon'-ee-on); Word Origin: Greek, Noun Neuter, Strong #: 1140. Demons are fallen angels who fell with Satan, when he rejected God's authority. According to Revelation 12 1/3 of the Angels rebelled with Satan against God. Demons refers to these fallen angels.

- Participants in pagan systems, might feel they are serving God, but are serving demons.
- Those who participate in pagan (New Age) religious systems are having fellowship with demons
- Fellowship with demons breaks our fellowship with the Lord

With these scriptures in mind, we need to recognize the appeal to the New Age is not simple innocence, but supplication and communication with demonic forces. These forces operate in the spiritual realms, they work for the destruction of souls. These demonic forces are fallen angels who rebelled with Satan, against God's authority, they are organized in battle against the saints, and God's work. Therefore, the believer must first seek the Lord, when confronting those who are involved in New Age matters, through prayer.

Steps to reach the lost in the New Age

- Prayer
- Help the New Ager understand the Biblical Position.
- Challenge the source of New Age authority through compassion and logic.
- Share with New Age follower why the Bible is true based on Biblical Evidence
- Share the need

Christian Dialogue with a New Ager

John Christian meets David Newager at a graduation party for a mutual friend, Sam Seeker.

DN: Hi my name is Dave I am a friend of Sam's

JC: Hi Dave, my name is John, Sam and I go to the same Church.

DN: I didn't know Dave was going to church, what kind of church do you go too?

JC: The church is called Bible Fellowship, it's a Bible Believing Church.

DN: You mean one of those "Born Again" Churches...I see ...that why Sam hasn't been able to Make it to Starbucks for the last three months on SundayI am going to have Talk to my buddy Sam.

JC: Dave, Do you go to church?

DN: John...I was raised Catholic and I went to Catholic School, But I haven't been there in quite, But I am Spiritual....What I have learned is you don't need to Go to Church or even read the Bible...to have a deep relationship with God.

JC: Dave what is your source for "Truth"? if its not the Bible?

DN: I Believe all religions are all part of the same package, like petals on a flower, Don't get me wrong, I think its great you go to church and Sam goes there too...for this stage in your spiritual walk...I am very happy for you.

JC: Dave, But how do you know what you believe is true?

DN: John, I have had actually communicated with a spiritual force unlike anything, anybody at any church could imagine. I started doing research and discovered I could access the power of the Divine from within, So after praying to my Divinity....I experienced something beyond any church. John, I know you might think I am nuts, but I don't expect church people to understand this. I have my own guiding spirit that has directed my life for the last 3 years.

JC: Actually Dave, I do understand what you are saying. I also believe we live in a spiritual world.

Thats what the Bible tells us, spiritual forces exist and are involved in the realm of mankind.

The question you need to ask yourself is who did you meet?

DN: I know who I met was part of me ...my Divine essence, because my guide affirmed that I am God,that we are all God, and all paths lead toward God.

JC: Dave, I would really question if all religions are talking about the same thing. For example, there are religions that practiced Human sacrifice such as the Aztecs of Mexico, sacrificing hundreds of thousands of people, including children. Part of the Aztec religion was the ritual

cannibalism of its enemies. Is that also part of God? In addition, what about contradictions in Islam and Christianity? Christians believe Jesus died on the cross and Muslims believe Jesus did not die on the cross, they can't both be right? Dave I would really question who it is that spoke to you?

DN: John what are you trying to say? Who do you think spoke to me?

JC: Well Dave, the Bible tells us that your spiritual experience is not unique, that we live in a spiritual world. In this world there are fallen angels, who along with Satan rebelled against God. This resulted in their fall, Satan then tempted Adam and Eve, when they fell Satan and his fallen angels received dominion over this earth. The bible in fact calls Satan the god of this age, that's god with a little g. (2 Corinthians 4:4). And Satan's fallen angels are his representatives who seek to deceive those living on the earth.

In the Old Testament and the New Testament the concept of channeling or talking to spirit guides is not new...one bit. This is an old practice call "Familiar Spirits" or Necromancy. The Bible warns against the practice, not because God doesn't want us to have spiritual knowledge but because, we are not really talking to who we think we are talking. We are really talking fallen angels, who masquerade as someone "Familiar". This is how Satan, deceives people.

DN: John, let me get this right are you saying that my spirit guide is a fallen angel and not from God? That's hard for me to believe, because this being is beautiful and full of peace.

JC: Dave, it all goes back to What is the truth? And who is it that you spoke to you? Because the being was beautiful and peaceful does is not unique. The Bible tells us that Satan himself masquerades as an "Angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). So its not hard to image that his fallen angels would come in the same manner. Dave, the Bible is very clear on the identity of God, we can't all be God. There is only One God, what the angel affirmed to you contradicts the Bible. Therefore I would question, who you are talking too?

DN: Well how do you know if the Bible is true?

JC: The Bible has all the proof anybody could want to prove that it is God's Word. Most people have never examined the evidence. There are several proofs the Bible is God's Word. The Bible is proven true, based on History, Archeology and Bible Prophecy.

DN: John, over the years the Bible has changed, its not the same as when it was first written down.

JC: Well Dave, the Dead Sea Scrolls would disagree with you, Portions of every book of the Bible have been found there except the book of Ester. These manuscripts were 1100 years older then earlier manuscripts used in the translation of the Bible, and they proved the Bible was unchanged from source documents.

DN: What proof do you have the Bible is true?

JC: Unlike any other book, the Bible tells us details about the future written thousands of years before the events. The nation of Israel in existence today was written about 2500 years ago in the book of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 36 and 37) and 3400 years ago in the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 28:64, 30:3). Hundreds of specific prophecies about Jesus were written hundreds of years before his birth, describing what would happen to him (Isaiah 52:13 to Isaiah 53:12). Even the exact month and year of Jesus death was foretold over 500 years before his birth (Daniel 9:24-27), and today's conflicts in the Middle East between Israel and the rest of the world are also foretold.

The Bible says there is only one way to Heaven, and that is through Jesus. That why its important too find the source of your guide.

DN: So how do you believe you get to Heaven?

JC: Dave, by receiving God's gift of salvation, by believing Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for our sins.

God

The New Age God is an impersonal force pervading all creation; this is known as *Monism* meaning "One-ism". They believe all that exists is derived from a single force of divine energy. This concept was popularized in the movie "Star Wars", where the Force, was present in the Universe.

This view of god harmonizes with the Hindu view of *Pantheism*. Pantheism believes all that exists is God; God is all that exists. This leads naturally to the concept of the divinity of the individual, that we are all Gods, Gods within the self and throughout the entire universe. The Hindu Vedas read:

This whole world is Brahma. Tranquil, let one worship. It as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breathes.²

Christian Response

God is distinct from his creation. He is the source of all that exists but his identity is distinct and eternal from what He created.

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I am the Lord, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; Isaiah 44:24

Thus says God the Lord, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, Who gives breath to the people on it, And spirit to those who walk on it: Isaiah 42:5

24 "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

25 "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. Acts 17:24-25

God is also a personal God knowing his creation and having a relationship with them being pleased and displeased.

7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. Genesis 12:7

11 So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle. Exodus 33:11

Man

Man is ultimately God, this follows from the *Monist* and *Pantheistic* view of God.

This is the being/embodiment relationship, as exemplified primarily in the Eastern religions and philosophies....this relationship simply affirms that all life is one, that I am one with God and can embody Divinity...God and I do not just communicate; we commune and are one. There is no separation except failure to recognize that there is no separation.³

Shirley MacLaine, a Hollywood voice for the New Age wrote in here book, *Out on a Limb*,

I know that I exist, therefore I AM, I know that the God-source exists. Therefore IT IS. Since I am part of that force, then I AM that I AM.⁴

² Benjamin Crème, *The reappearance of the Christ and the Masers of Wisdom* (London:Tara Press, 1980) 209

Christian Response

The Bible clearly distinguishes God from Man who was created by God for God's Glory.

7 Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."
Isaiah 43:7

5 'I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are on the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it to whom it seemed proper to Me.
Jeremiah 27:5

Salvation

Since mankind is not a fallen creature, no salvation is necessary. We only need to rescue from ignorance of our godhood. Once we enter "god-realization", "enlightenment", "attunement" or "at-one-ment (With God), we are personally transformed.

We already know everything. The knowingness of our divinity is the highest intelligence. And to be what we already know is the free will. Free will is simply the enactment of the realization that you are God, a realization that you are divine.⁵

The aim of a Course in Miracles is to lead us from duality to oneness—to the realization of our At-one-ment with God, our Self, and all people—our brothers. In this healing, is our Salvation—we are saved from our misperceptions of ourselves as separated individuals. When our perception is corrected we remember our true or higher Self...Salvation is really enlightenment.⁶

Christian Response

The Bible clearly teaches that some will be saved and others will not be saved. Salvation is not universal. Individuals live one life and must give an account for that one life.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

"Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

Matthew 7:21-23

27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
Hebrews 9:27

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ The Jesus of the New Age is differs from the Biblical Jesus. The New Age separates Jesus from Christ. Jesus was one of many Christs or teachers, who came to show the way. Christ is seen as office being held by an avatar or teacher.

Jesus differed but little from other children, only that in past lives he had overcome carnal propensities...Jesus was a remarkable child, for by ages of strenuous preparation he was qualified to be an avatar, a savior of the world.⁷

In every age Teachers have come forth from this spiritual centre to enable mankind to take its next evolutionary step; we know them, among others, as Hercules, Hermes, Rama, Mithra, Vyasa, Sanskaracharya, Krishna, Buddha, and the Christ. All perfect men in their time, all sons of men who became Sons of God, for having revealed their innate Divinity.⁸

Christian Response

³ J.D. Salinger, *Nine Stories*, 288

⁴ Shirley Maclaine, *Dancing in the Light* (New York : Bantam Books, 1985) 420

⁵ William Goldstein, "Life on the Astral Plane," *Publishers Weekly* (March 18, 1983): 46 (Quoting Shirley Maclaine)

⁶ Julius J. Finegold and William M. Thetford, *Choose Once Again: Selection from a Course in Miracles*, 2-3

Jesus is God incarnate, God the Son born of a virgin, who came into the world and died on a cross.
Jesus is the only means of salvation.

- 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
John 14:6
- 4 And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.
- 5 "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.
Matthew 24:4-5
- 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.
- 26 "And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this
John 11:25-26

Astrology

Christian Response

Astrology and Horoscopes are not new but repackaged paganism condemned in the Bible. The stars of the Universe were created for light on the earth. They are not to be worshipped or used for

- 12 "Stand now with your enchantments And the multitude of your sorceries, In which you have labored from your youth-
Perhaps you will be able to profit, Perhaps you will prevail.
- 13 You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, And the monthly prognosticators
Stand up and save you From what shall come upon you.
Isaiah 47:12-15
- 2 Thus says the Lord: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, For the Gentiles are
dismayed at them.
Jeremiah 10:2
- 19 "And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of
heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the
whole heaven as a heritage.
Deuteronomy 4:19

Spirit Guides, Mediums, Channeling

- 31 'Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.
Leviticus 19:31
- 6 'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against
that person and cut him off from his people.
'A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone
them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them.' "
Leviticus 20:6,27
- 19 And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a
people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?
Isaiah 8:19
- 16 Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who
brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.
- 17 This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who

⁷ Levi Downing, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Marina del Rey, Calif; De Vorss and Company, 1981), 12

⁸ Crème, *Reappearance*, 28

proclaim to us the way of salvation."

- 18 And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.
- 19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.
Acts 16:16-19

Crystals

Christian Response

Crystals are a form of idoltry, the belief is that Crystals contain inert mystical power in conjunction with its color.

- 32 "What you have in your mind shall never be, when you say, 'We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone.'
Ezekiel 20:32

- 28 "And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.
Deuteronomy 4:28

Reincarnation

Christian Response

Reincarnation is a Hinduism and Buddhist belief introduced via the New-Age movement. Scripture clearly teaches that we have one life, after this life we must give an account. For this reason, Christ died on the cross, to pay for our sins. Reincarnation is salvation through works, as the soul has a 2nd, 3rd, 4th etc..turns at redemption. This deceives people into thinking they will have another opportunity at salvation if they don't make it in this life.

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
Hebrews 9:27

Lazarus and the rich man

- 19 "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.
20 "But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,
21 "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.
22 "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.
23 "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.
24 "Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'
25 "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.
26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'
27 "Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,
28 'for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'
29 "Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'
30 "And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'
31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "
Luke 16:19-31

MY TESTIMONY

I was brought up Jewish, went to Shabbat quite faithfully each Friday and Hebrew school twice a week and was Bar Mitzvahed and confirmed. While attending classes I asked a lot of questions the Rabbi could not answer. I became less interested in the traditional religion of my parents and feeling hindered in my spiritual development, leaped head first in to my own brand of freestyle spirituality after graduation.

I got involved in the New Age Movement, became a vegetarian and for 15 years practiced yoga and meditation. I ended up using psychedelic drugs (LSD, mescaline etc.), as part of my regular religious observances and smoked "pakalolo" as part of my normal lifestyle. During these times I also experimented with various religions and the occult. I felt they each contained some part of the truth of the one "true" religion, just as Rosicrucianism teaches all religions are petals on the same flower.

I studied about the Ancient Masters of the East, learning about Buddhism and Zen and believed in the Ascended Masters. I was involved with UFO's and channeled messages. I had a number of spiritual experiences which at the time I thought were from God. I was sure I was on the right spiritual path. At the same time I also read the Bible, not denying my Jewish roots. I was starting to read over 50 books a year, having an insatiable spiritual appetite, but God was working on my exit out of this spiritual bondage.

I had also started to surf before beginning my spiritual pilgrimage. I fell in love with the sport and began traveling, surfing and entering contests. Surfing became my livelihood after I learned to shape surfboards for a living. I was the eastern surfing champion for two years and Hawaii proved to be an irresistible attraction due to its fantastic surf. I moved permanently to Hawaii in the mid 70's. This gave me more freedom to pursue both my first love of surfing and my freelance spirituality. After nine years my searching came to a head when I and my girlfriend Kathy started to pursue our spiritual hunger more seriously and became involved in the "I Am Movement" (the Saint Germaine Society of the Ballard's). We thought we were becoming enlightened. reading books about the Ascended Masters and "learning" about Earth's past history on Lemuria and Atlantis. Through calling on angels and powers unknown to us and by "decreeing" and using the Violet Consuming Flame to eradicate past life karma, we desired to become servants of the New Age movement. At the time Kathy was practicing affirmations, mantras, studying herbology, polarity therapy, kinesiology and learning about the supposed spiritual energies of the body. She also was a manager of a health store on the Island.

The Lord started moving ahead with our rescue plan and during one week we had two friends over who had recently become Christians. We talked about end-time events for hours as I was reading the Bible for years and especially fascinated about the end of the age . (At this time we both thought Christians were very narrow minded about their view of the Bible, God and the world. Kathy and I used to laugh about how the New Age was coming in without Christians even being aware of it and were still trying to live in the old traditions and were not going to be part of it). Later that week my friends invited us to a seminar that was going to be about the New Age Movement with speakers Dave Hunt, Johanna Michaelson and Hal Lindsey. Talk about timing! It was also during that same week that I heard an audible voice that said "I am the Lord your God, you shall not want." I recognized this was from Psalm 23 from my Jewish upbringing and had never experienced anything like it. Inside I knew this was the God I was searching for but still did not know.

I attended the Christian conference on Bible prophecy and the New Age Movement that week while Kathy stayed home doing her New Age affirmations. She wasn't feeling well and unknowingly had really been going through a spiritual battle all that week. At the conference I was shocked to hear the other side of the story. The information I heard seemed incredible. The speakers knew all about the occult techniques Kathy and I were following, practicing and about the New Age Movement's master plans. I spoke to Dave Hunt briefly during a break and had a number of important questions were answered. One was why did Jesus said why you have forsaken me. Though I was reading the Bible all these years I could not understand the gospel. I was also challenged by Dave on the occult practices in which I was personally practicing. One question he asked is if you're God did you create the universe? I had never thought this through, if I'm trying to become god through all these New Age techniques, how could this be possible, when God was always all knowing and all powerful (according to the Scriptures and what I had heard through their speaking that night). It was through this question that began a chain of events for the Lord to really minister truth to my heart and mind. When the conference resumed Johanna spoke and I was relating to a lot she had experienced, especially in regards to the Ascended Master "Jesus". Then she spoke about another Jesus – the true Jesus of the Bible - which came as a total shock. I never thought there could be false Jesus' parading around as the real one. It all made sense. When she prayed it pierced my heart. I knew I had heard the truth, but the question was, what would I do about it?

All the way home I wrestled with the wasted time I had spent believing and doing the wrong things for the past 15 years. (prior to this I thought Christians were very narrow minded but now I had to reconsider that I was too open-minded and bought into a lie.) I asked my friends who brought me to the meeting questions that were running through my mind. Being new Christians they could not answer most of them but just kept saying we know the Bible is God's Word and Jesus is the truth.

Kathy was waiting up for me when I got home. It was late and she was actually scared that I would come home a Christian! But a peace came in the house and on her, as I shared about how the Christians viewed the last days and how it wasn't anything like what we were being taught in the new age. It was then that the Holy Spirit revealed to Kathy that not only were we following the wrong Jesus, but that we were worshipping Satan, and that he is a literal being. Then the fear of God fell upon us and for the first time we got down on our knees and prayed to the true living God to forgive us for the occult beliefs we had been deceived into practicing. The Lord got the last laugh, but it was a pleasant one of victory.

The next morning we both went to church and for the first time heard the gospel explained and dedicated our lives to the Lord, repenting and asking Christ to forgive us. Thank the Lord He intervened. We were saved together in the year 1986. After going to church and receiving Christ, it was later that week I found out that it was on the 20th anniversary of my confirmation day when God spoke that previous week. The last thing I read to the congregation in the temple 20 years before had been Proverbs 4:1 "Hear my children, the instruction of a Father, and give attention to know understanding, for I have given you good doctrine forsake not my law." Unfortunately I did forsake it for 20 years, but God brought me and my soon-to-be wife back. Five weeks after our spiritual birth Kathy and I were married and today have a nine year old son.

Immediately, I began to study the Bible and learn apologetics in order to give answers to those who ask why we believe in Christ and why Jesus is God in the flesh. For over 16 years I have continued teaching on the cults and aberrant world views including how the cults deny grace and opt for works to be accepted by God. These include the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, and also the occult (New Age world view) which is now very present inside the Church.

By the grace of God I have had the privilege to have taught at Youth With A Mission, Hope Chapels, Calvary Chapels, Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, Grace Brethren, Assembly of God and various other Hawaii congregations. I have also had the opportunity to share in small

group studies around the Island and have also been involved in a number of debates. The Lord has currently provided us with the opportunity to host a TV program and a live call-in broadcast called "Let Us Reason" on a local Christian station as well as to be featured on several other live radio broadcasts in Hawaii. I am also a missionary for Witness Inc., the world's largest counter cult ministry reaching out to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Let Us Reason Ministries was founded in 1994 as an up-to-date apologetic resource center to instill both confidence and a desire to lead others to Christ by helping equip believers with both Biblical, and logical answers for their Christian faith. It's my hope that this ministry will be able to prompt believers to personally meet and evangelize those in cults and false religions as well as discern false doctrine within the Church.

Reaching New Agers on their own turf ⁹

By Gene Wilson

Vol. 31, No. 2

Jeff Taylor, a freelance writer from Oregon, in an article in the New Age Journal describes an encounter with a visitation team from a local evangelical church. The two young men had all the right answers but the packaging was all wrong.

Taylor entitled his article "Forgiving trespassers: God works in mysterious ways—but door-to-door?" Here are a few excerpts:

"Well, have you been saved?" asks one of the visitors.

Taylor reflects: "God requires me to love my fellow man, but not necessarily to tell him everything. Above my desk, which they can't see, is a picture of Jesus, and beside him are several great saints from other traditions. I have worshipped with Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, Sufis, Hindus, Unitarians, and once, in a tent revival, with fundamentalist Baptists. God was there, every place, every time. As far as my salvation is concerned, my approach is "we'll see."⁹

Taylor answers: "Not saved, exactly, more like recycled over several times." . . . "OK," I say, "but my problem is, it all seems too exclusive. I'd have to reject a lot of ideas I've spent a lifetime stuffing into my sinful head. And if I joined your church, could I still write?"

Taylor concludes: "That pretty well wraps it up. In a few minutes, after some general condemnation of my incorrect beliefs and impious lifestyle, they depart, not looking back. Perhaps they're afraid of turning to pillars of salt. I take the tract inside, along with a few sticks of firewood.

"Who was that?" my wife asks. "Salesmen," I tell her. "They're gone." "Praise God."¹

We've all had an encounter with a New Ager. We've read the books, the conspiracy theories, the philosophical explanations, the warnings of cultic seduction. But has it helped us reach this growing segment of our population? As a church-planting pastor in Quebec, Canada, when I first realized there was something to this New Age hype, my primary concern was protecting the flock. I went so far as to give a seminar on "How the New Age Movement Fits Into End Times Prophecy." I hate to admit it, but I hardly gave a thought to reaching these people. That is, until that day in December, 1987, when I visited my sister in Pennsylvania.

Let's call her Mary. I stayed with Mary while participating in a missions conference. I had just finished reading about Elizabeth Montgomery, her visions, her spiritual guides, and what they taught her about the New Age to come. So when I saw one of Montgomery's books on the counter I jumped. Then I noticed the

⁹ The Billy Graham Center, Wheaton Illinois <http://bgc.gospelcom.net/emis/1995/newagers.htm>

yoga sessions on the calendar, the soothing New Age music at supper, and countless other signs that I was in a New Age home.

My first reflex was to panic. Then I wanted to attack. I mean, we grew up in a missionary home, this couldn't be! But I simply asked, "Mary, what do you think about this Montgomery book?" She went on to ask me if I believed in "astral travel." Someone I knew had experienced it, but I wouldn't recommend it. "How about angels and spiritual guides?" she continued. She was taken aback by the thought that there might be two varieties. By the end of the week, while taking me to the airport, Mary asked me to send her Christian literature about what happens after death, and how to interpret the book of Revelation.

A year later I was in Montreal knocking my head against the wall, trying to find a receptive target group. I read that the New Age Movement was rapidly replacing Catholicism (or merging with it) to become the dominant world view. The thought occurred to me, What if the New Agers I hear so much about here are more like Mary than Shirley MacLaine? Maybe they aren't all demon-possessed yet. A missionary friend encouraged me. He had struck up some good conversations with browsers in the occult/esoteric section of his local bookstore. I soon found out others were thinking along the same lines.

In 1981, Pierre Lebel, assistant director for Youth With A Mission Quebec, went with a group of Christians from his local church to pray and distribute tracts outside an Occult Science Fair in downtown Montreal. They soon found that besides this fair there were two annual New Age expositions and two annual Esoteric Fairs attracting around 10,000 visitors each. A friend made a few well-placed calls. Clode de Guise, editor of a New Age magazine, said over the phone that 10,000 people in Montreal make their living from the esoteric practices and each fair has about 100 booths. So why not set up a booth right in the middle of the fair? Pierre found out that Raymond Taylor, an evangelist with Christian Direction in Montreal, had tried it.

In the spring of 1986 Raymond received a phone call from a man whom he had led to the Lord. This man had landed a contract to put on a show at the Occult Science Fair. What should he do? Taylor responded that "there is no place so dark that we can't let our light shine there."

So Taylor went with his friend and received permission to speak one minute at the end of each show, three times a day for 10 consecutive days. In 10 days 424 copies of the Bible in a modern translation were sold and hundreds heard a gospel witness. Perhaps the real breakthrough was the realization that this is a not a movement to be opposed from the outside, it is a mission field to be penetrated with prayer and by believers armed for spiritual battle.²

Before learning of these efforts, God taught me an important lesson about this unique mission field. My missionary friend Jay Pinney suggested one day, "There's only one way to find out if we can reach some of these people. Let's give it a try." We purchased tickets and went from booth to booth striking up conversations with fortune tellers and cosmic theory peddlers. Most had little solid knowledge of what Jesus really stood for, and were more interested in selling their wares than in pursuing the conversation.

Then we stood in back of a hall where a New Age guru was giving a lecture. All of a sudden his microphone stopped and he became extremely flustered. As this continued and people started rising and heading out, I looked over to Jay. He smiled, "See what the power of prayer can do." That day we learned that prayer could bind the enemy's agents and allow us to reach true seekers.

Momentum was building. A coalition formed between YWAM, Operation Mobilization, and Christian Direction to develop a strategy and recruit funds and workers to reach New Agers. The first effort came together in April, 1990. The backdrop of the booth was an enormous black banner with a boy staring into a starry sky. The caption said, "Christ the Mystery of the Nations." Pierre Lebel wrote a special pamphlet with the same title to give out with Gospels of John. As people stopped to examine a catchy title at the book display, a trained volunteer from one of the local churches would ask them to share their opinions by taking a specially constructed survey. That first year on average 515 surveys were taken at each fair, with 120 people leaving their name and address for further discussion.³

This ministry has continued for four years now. After starting as a volunteer, I was asked to coordinate the follow-up and do a study in order to fine tune the outreach. Since New Age fairs and gatherings are now taking place in most of our major cities, I will share some patterns from the 886 surveys taken at four different fairs in 1992, with the hope that something may be useful to people starting out in ministry to New Agers.

1. Woman's answers indicate a stronger degree of New Age belief than men have. For example, about 10 percent more of the women believed in reincarnation. More were interested in crystals, alternative medicine, and New Age music.

2. Respondents gave many conflicting answers. For example, 57 percent said they would describe the spiritual world as "an energy or a force." However, 72 percent agree that a personal being could be the reason the universe exists. A closer look at the data tells me that this doesn't necessarily mean these people can't line up two ideas. Rather, it belies the fact that more and more people are torn between two conflicting world views which they haven't fully sorted out yet.

3. Almost half of the respondents (42 percent) said they were willing to talk to someone later about spirituality and Jesus Christ; almost all of them left their phone number and address. However, there was no positive correlation between openness to talk and a theistic world view. The key factors seemed to be a spirit of inquiry and a positive rapport with the interviewer.

4. It's hard to construct the profile of a typical respondent. Beliefs varied tremendously. There were more New Age explorers than New Age converts. David H. Thorne, publisher of the New Age Journal, confirms, this: "Frankly, new age thinking defies simple definitions and apt explanations. There are no creeds, no doctrines, no dogmatic pronouncements, no claims of a monopoly on the truth. In fact, there are many conflicting views, many disparate paths. . . ."⁴

5. The most common core beliefs were: belief in a spiritual world (97 percent), in spiritual guides (42 percent), in God as a cosmic energy or force (57 percent). And yet 72 percent believed that a personal being brought the universe into being, 58 percent that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully man and fully God (some would claim the same for all people), and 73 percent, that Jesus Christ could help them in their present spiritual pilgrimage. It seems as though many have blended their core Catholic beliefs with New Age universalism and monism.

6. The constituency of the New Age movement is still in flux. A little over half were attending for the first time, and 48 percent said that curiosity drew them. The growth pattern is showing signs of waning. One of the fairs has threatened to close. It could be that in years to come the constituency will become more stable.

I find the following progression index helpful when talking with visitors at a New Age fair:

4. the devotees
3. the adepts
2. the seekers
1. the curious

The curious resemble the simple in Proverbs. They need to be warned and asked if they have ever seriously considered what Christ came to accomplish. We need to avoid scaring the seekers away. Often their search is genuine, but they are turned off by traditional religion. This is why the umbrella organization for this effort is called "The Point of Reference: A Center for Christian Alternatives." I try to present Christ as the reliable source for a genuine spiritual pilgrimage, and later explain how the cross is the only point of entry.

Adepts should not be seen as a lost cause. Many slide into the movement unwittingly through consulting a fortune teller at a time of crisis, or through the influence of a friend. For example, John Naisbitt, author of Megatrends, was initiated through Patricia Aburdene, a writer he met in a Washington bookstore and later married.⁵

Adepts need to be challenged as to their world view and its practical implications. They may just be willing to check out for themselves what Jesus has to say. One such young lady by the name of Linda worked with a Christian in our ministry. After a couple of years she ended her search by asking Christ to be her Savior and Lord. The following day she woke up with an invisible force pushing her chest and holding her down in bed. For the following months we worked together to identify and close doors that had been opened through her New Age practices. She burned books and went through several sessions of prayer therapy.

In the New Age movement devotees are profiting in some way from their involvement. Some are pursuing material gain. Others extract some kind of psychological or social benefit. Freedom from the past is never easy. Those involved in teaching or promoting New Age practices are either aggressive toward what they see as an "exclusionist belief system," or disarmingly inclusive. Either way, the experienced witness should go with someone who can give prayer and intellectual support.

I learned the hard way when I met a Baha'i teacher who possessed psychic powers. After an hour of discussion and debate alone in his apartment, I was so physically exhausted I had a hard time getting home to my apartment. Prayer cover is essential. This is a spiritual battle.

7. Belief in the Bible as authoritative is rapidly eroding. Only 20 percent believed it is the unique revelation of God, while 38 percent prefer to see it as a collection of spiritual writings containing some truth. After 1990 the question, "Would you like to meet someone to talk about spirituality and the Bible?" was changed to "Spirituality and Jesus Christ," and positive responses went up 21 percent. I believe we must lead New Agers to allegiance to Christ first and foremost. In the process they will see our confidence in Scripture, and eventually we will be in a position to lay out the authority of the Bible.

8. Quality follow-up is key to an effective ministry. Only half of the respondents continued a dialogue by phone or in person. It should be done by the person who made the contact at the fair. Careful selection and orientation of volunteers are crucial. The personal contact should be viewed as a temporary bridge that will start to crumble within 48 hours if it is not reinforced by a friendly phone call. I suggest a personal testimony be given early on in the follow-up visit, and the person be invited to study one of the Gospels. The witness could be seen as a building process which will involve some demolition of false ideology and progression toward a clear response to the claims of Christ.

9. The participants must be prepared for crisis intervention through prayers for deliverance. At one point a young man practically ran into our booth seeking shelter from an abusive cult. A lady who had been practicing automatic writing whispered in my ear, "At first I wanted guidance; now I just want to get rid of this spiritual guide. I'm scared."

Several times I have been challenged to debate while onlookers gathered. Once a former singer and well known TV personality attempted to trip us with clever questions while a crowd gathered. Because of the prayers of a worker who recognized him, his attempt failed. I later learned that he had become a leader in a New Age cult and probably wanted to show his friends how he could overpower the Christians.

10. Those who make professions of faith need to go through a very deliberate process of deliverance and establishing in Christ. For almost a year, a man in our church plant who was a psychic and a healer held onto his crystals and onto the hope he could use his magnetic healing in Christ's service. There was a real hold in his life that had to be confronted head on. When another young apprentice fortune teller came to Christ, he determined to make a clean break with the past, but was harassed by physical attacks and unsolicited visions. He had to be taught and equipped to claim Christ's authority and walk according to his new position in Christ. This process took about a year. I found Neil Andersen's Seven Steps to Freedom in Christ to be very helpful.

As a result of the survey, the coordinating team for our New Age outreach is trying a new approach this year (1994). We will include more open-ended questions in the survey which allow the person to express their views in their own words. We will also include questions about the level of satisfaction with the present spiritual pilgrimage and activities. If someone indicates an interest, we will offer a diagnostic session with a trained spiritual counselor right there on the spot. All this, we trust, will help us address the person as an individual and build a stronger rapport before attempting to make a follow-up contact.

So, the next time your neighbor says, "I can't remember you. I must have met you in a former life," please don't panic. Remember, she may be more like my sister Mary than like Shirley MacLaine. She may even be closer to looking to God for answers to her longing than your churchgoing neighbor who feels pretty good about herself. It probably will take lots of prayer and time. Invite her over for coffee. Going door-to-door may not be the best approach.

END NOTES

1. Jeff Taylor, "Forgiving trespassers: God works in mysterious ways, but door-to-door?" *New Age Journal*,

December, 1986, p. 144.

2. Carole Tapin, "Jesus Christ at the esoteric fair," *Flash Quebec*, May, 1991, p. 3.

3. Ibid.

4. David Thorne, "Introducing: The New Age Society," *New Age Journal*, November, 1986, p. 4.

5. David Gelman, "Reinventing the corporation," *Newsweek*, September 23, 1985.

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