

Appendix III – A Christian View of the “New Age” Movement

By the New Age Movement I refer to a “feel good” spirituality which borrows elements from world religions as well as occult beliefs and practices and then assembles them into an amalgam promising enlightenment to its adherents. Actress Shirley Maclaine seemed to emerge as the face of the movement in the 1980’s, and it has been going strong since with best-sellers such as Neale Donald Walsch’s *Conversations With God* trilogy and James Redfield’s *Celestine Prophecy*, the literary output and QVC appearances of Sylvia Browne, and television mediums James Van Praagh and John Edwards.

The question I want to address in this appendix is how New Age Movement practitioners claiming spiritual encounters through trances, séances, Ouija boards, automatic writing, etc., could come to such strange and contradictory conclusions about the identity of Jesus. I believe that some people are making it up, milking a public with shallow religious knowledge. In other cases I think we may be dealing with individuals suffering from mental illness, people who are not having spiritual encounters but hallucinations.

There’s a third possibility as well, and this will undoubtedly sound to some like I have gone off the deep end: these “spiritual experiences” are encounters with the demonic. The seeking of supernatural experiences, or information, from sources other than the One God is a dangerous undertaking.

You may be stunned that I believe in ‘the Devil.’ Let’s make sure we understand what ‘the Devil,’ or Satan, or the Adversary is though. Christianity doesn’t conceive of him as a being equal but opposite to God. Far from it; he is a creature, one of the angelic realm. As such he is much more powerful than human beings, but still only a finite creature in opposition to an infinite and eternal Creator. Pope Paul VI, the pope who oversaw the closing of Vatican Council II, did not dismiss the Devil as outmoded superstition. During a 1972 address he stated very plainly:

What are the greatest needs of the Church today? Don’t let our answer surprise you as being over simple or even superstitious or unreal: one of the greatest needs is defense from that evil which is called the Devil.

Evil is not merely a lack of something, but an effective agent, a living spiritual being, perverted and perverting. A terrible reality...

It is contrary to the teaching of the Bible and the Church to refuse to recognize the existence of such a reality...or to explain it as a pseudo-reality, a conceptual and fanciful personification of the unknown causes of our misfortunes...(Nov.15, 1972).

Scripture clearly teaches the existence of such a being. In fact, it speaks of many creatures, demons, allied with the Devil. They are presented as the antitheses angels, fallen angels to be more precise. But not only is the Bible very frank on these matters, it is also very firm in its condemnation of the occult practices so prevalent in the New Age movement. In the Old Testament we read:

Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God (Leviticus 19:31, emphasis added).

There shall not be found among you any one who...practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

And when they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the teaching and to the testimony [instead]!(Isaiah 8:19-20).

When we turn to the New Testament we have a first person account of how the Apostle Paul reacted to the occult. Luke, his traveling companion, wrote:

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, “these men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul was annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, “I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour (Acts 16:16-19).