

FAITH EVANGELICAL SEMINARY

New Age "Pop Culture" -

A PAPER SUBMITTED TO DR. DENNIS J. AS REQUIRED PER THE SYLLABUS FOR TH 5313 *THEOLOGY 3:*

MAN, SIN & SALVATION

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November 19, 2008

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ABSTRACT

Daytime television is full of shows with gurus and psychics, sages and those who talk to the dead. Oprah Winfrey often has New Age devotees on her show that channel spirits, or guests who accept an Eastern mystical worldview that purport to be healers, doctors, or psychologists, and the like. While the New Age movement is not monolithic in its teachings (in fact varying wildly), it does have one thing in common, and that is that the viewers of such shows and personalities rarely – if ever – investigate these people's philosophy and their claims. And so, I will attempt to meld a few of my papers as well as add some pertinent information that will enlighten the curious and tackle issues raised by Dr. House.

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LAWS OF LOGIC

When we look to nature, we see that there are laws within nature, such as the law of gravity; just as there are laws in nature, there are also laws of thought, or laws of logic. Like Sir Isaac Newton being the first to encapsulate the law of gravity, so to was Aristotle the first to encapsulate many of the “laws of logic.”¹ These laws can assist us in the delineation between what is coherent, and what is likewise incoherent. I will give some examples of a law in action, and then define this law. The example involves the nature of truth, always a sticky situation.

Everyone has at one time, or another heard the phrase, “what’s true for you may not be true for me.”² It is the idea that there are no universal truths that both you and I should adhere to. This is called relativism.³ It asserts that truth is relative, or, whatever the individual accepts as true or not true – it’s all relative to the individual. Again, relativism claims that all so-called truth is relative, that there really is no absolute truth that man can know, but that different things (whatever they may be) may be true for me but not for you. (This is at times called perspectivism.)

Statement: There is no such thing as absolute truth; [or alternatively, there are many truths.]⁴

Is this philosophy of relativism making the statement that this is the ultimate, absolute truth about truth? In that case, it asserts what it denies, and so is self-deleting, simply logically incoherent as a

¹ Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomas Learning, 2001), 51.

² Dan Story, *Christianity on the Offense: Responding to the Beliefs and Assumptions of Spiritual Seekers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1998), 29.

³ “The denial that there are certain kinds of universal truths,” Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Cambridge Univ, 1999), 790.

⁴ Tom Morris, *Philosophy for Dummies* (New York, NY: IDG Books; 1999), 46

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philosophical/logical position⁵ and in violation of the Law of Noncontradiction (LNC), one of the most important laws of logical thought.⁶

Another example of this law used is illustrated in this mock conversation between Steven and George:⁷

Steven: "You shouldn't push your morality on me."

George: "I'm not entirely sure what you mean by that statement. Do you mean I have no right to an opinion?"

Steven: "You have a right to your opinion, but you have no right to force it on anyone."

George: "Is that your opinion?"

Steven: "Yes."

George: "Then why are you forcing it on me?"

Steven: "But you're saying **your** view is right."

George: "Am I wrong?"

Steven: "Yes."

George: "Then you're saying only **your** view is right, which is the very thing you objected to me saying."

One may be wondering what this has to do with the subject of the New Age movement that is popularly found in such writers as Deepak Chopra. I am merely using the above as an example of a concept but be sure that statements about truth being relative are ripe within the New Age movement... of which Dr. Chopra is a part of. Let us continue with the examples that will encapsulate this law, then I will give

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "...[the Law of Non-contradiction]...is considered the foundation of logical reasoning," Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth; 2001), 51; "A theory in which this law fails...is an inconsistent theory", edited by Ted Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, (New York, NY: Oxford Univ, 1995), 625.

⁷ Adapted from Francis Beckwith & Gregory Koukl's book, *Relativism: Feet Planted in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books; 1998), 144-146.

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some examples as to how this applies to Eastern thought and its disciples. The Law of Noncontradiction is simply this: "'A' cannot be both 'non-A' and 'A' at the same time." In the words of professor J. P. Moreland:

"When a statement fails to satisfy itself (i.e., to conform to its own criteria of validity or acceptability), it is self-refuting.... Consider some examples. 'I cannot say a word in English' is self-refuting when uttered in English. 'I do not exist' is self-refuting, for one must exist to utter it. The claim 'there are no truths' is self-refuting. If it is false, then it is false. But if it is true, then it is false as well, for in that case there would be no truths, including the statement itself."⁸

PANTHEISM

Now that we have defined what the Law of Noncontradiction is, let's apply it to some basic Eastern thinking. All Hindus, Buddhists, New Agers (etc), are pantheists. The term Pantheist "designates one who holds both that everything there is constitutes a unity and that this unity is divine."⁹ Most pantheists (Hindus, Buddhists, New Agers, etc.) would hold that physical reality, and all the evils it produces, is merely an illusion. This holds true for the personality of man as well. This distinction explains why, in both Hinduism and Buddhism, the personality is seen as an "enemy" and is finally destroyed by absorption into Brahmin or Nirvana. Not only is the material creation absorbed, but human existence are either an illusion, as in Hinduism (maya), or so empty and impermanent, as in Buddhism (sunyata), that they are ultimately meaningless.

⁸ J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 92.

⁹ Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 641; "[T]he doctrine that God is the transcendent reality of which the material universe and human beings are only manifestations: it involves a denial of God's personality and expresses a tendency to identify God and nature," *Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* (Random House Inc, 1999), CD-ROM, cf. Pantheist.

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But is an impersonal “immortality” truly meaningful when it extinguishes our personal existence forever? Is it even desirable? As Sri Lanken Ajith Fernando, who has spoken to hundreds of Buddhists and Hindus, illustrates:

“When I asked a girl who converted from Buddhism to Christianity through our ministry what attracted her to Christianity, the first thing she told [me] was, ‘I did not want Nirvana.’ The prospect of having all her desires snuffed out after a long and dreary climb [toward ‘liberation’] was not attractive to her.”¹⁰

In the end, man himself is a hindrance to spiritual enlightenment and must be “destroyed” to find so called “liberation.” As Dr. Frits Staal comments in an article entitled, “Indian Concepts of the Body,” “Whatever the alleged differences between Hindu and Buddhist doctrines, one conclusion follows from the preceding analysis. No features of the individual[’s] personality survive death in either state”¹¹

With the above in mind, take note of a major problem that faces the pantheist *visa viz*, “that there is no reality except the all-encompassing ‘God’.” Using the Law of Noncontradiction we can see that this is a nonsensical statement that is logically self-refuting. If everything is an illusion, then those making that statement are themselves illusions. There’s a real problem here. As Norman Geisler pointed out, “One must exist in order to affirm that he does not exist.”¹² When we claim that there is no reality except the all-encompassing God, we are proving just the opposite. The fact that we exist to make the claim demonstrates that there is a reality distinct from God, which makes this key doctrine of pantheism a self-defeating proposition. It is an untruth – by definition.

¹⁰ Ajith Fernando, *The Supremacy of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1995), 241

¹¹ Somantics: The Magazine/Journal of the Bodily Arts and Sciences, Autumn/Winter 1983-1984, 33.

¹² Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 187.

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REINCARNATION

Another belief that is accepted by all Eastern philosophies as well as the New Age movement is that of reincarnation. I will explain the concept with some examples, after I define the term. Reincarnation is a "belief in the successive rebirth of souls into new bodies, as the soul progresses toward perfection."¹³

Some examples of this "karmic law" are warranted: first, lets assume I beat and abused my wife horribly, treated her like the dirt on my shoes, I would be storing up some pretty bad karma. When I come around for my next human life, after, of course, traveling through the insect, and animal lives, I would come back as the woman being beat. This is karma's answer to evil, which is really no answer at all. In fact, it perpetuates evil. How so? It necessitates a "beatee," which mandates a "beater." Karma, then, creates a never-ending circle of violence, or, "evil." In addition it states (emphatically I might add) that we choose our current destiny (or events) in this life due to past life experiences and choices. This is why the holy men in Buddhist and Hindu nations generally walk right by the maimed, injured, starving, and uneducated, and do not care for them. This next true story drives this point home.

Ron Carlson, while speaking in Thailand, was invited to visit some refugee camps along the Cambodian border. Over 300,000 refugees were caught in a no-man's-land along the border. This resulted from the Cambodian massacre under Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge in the mid-70's (which is known as the "killing fields") and then subsequently by the invasion of the Vietnamese at the end of the 70's. One of the most fascinating things about these refugee camps was the realization of who was caring for the refugees. Here, in this Buddhist country of Thailand, with Buddhist refugees coming from Cambodia and

¹³ Debra Lardie, *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 218;
"Proponents base their beliefs on the idea of karma, the Hindu concept of the force generated by the sum total of an individual's actions, especially religious or ritual actions both good and bad. Hinduism teaches that the lives of people are an accumulation of both good and bad karma. The imbalance of this accumulation determines the circumstances for the next reincarnation life" (Ibid., 218-219).

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Laos, there were no Buddhists taking care of their like-minded brothers. There were also no Atheists, Hindus, or Muslims taking care of those people. The only people there, taking care of these 300,000[+] people, were Christians from Christian mission organizations and Christian relief organizations. One of the men Ron was with had lived in Thailand for over twenty-years and was heading up a major portion of the relief effort for one of these organizations. Ron asked him: "Why, in a Buddhist country, with Buddhist refugees, are there no Buddhists here taking care of their Buddhist brothers?" Ron will never forget his answer:

"Ron, have you ever seen what Buddhism does to a nation or a people? Buddha taught that each man is an island unto himself. Buddha said, 'if someone is suffering, that is his karma.' You are not to interfere with another person's karma because he is purging himself through suffering and reincarnation! Buddha said, 'You are to be an island unto yourself.'" - "Ron, the only people that have a reason to be here today taking care of these 300,000 refugees are Christians. It is only Christianity that people have a basis for human value that people are important enough to educate and to care for. For Christians, these people are of ultimate value, created in the image of God, so valuable that Jesus Christ died for each and every one of them. You find that value in no other religion, in no other philosophy, but in Jesus Christ."¹⁴

Do you get it now? It takes a "Mother Teresa" with a Christian worldview to go into these embattled countries and bathe, feed, educate, care for these people – who otherwise are ignored due to harmful religious beliefs of the East.

Another example is a graphic one, but it drives the point home. While at home on my day off, my work calls me in due to an emergency. I cannot find a sitter for my youngest son, so I call a family member,

¹⁴ Ron Carlson and Ed Decker, *Fast Facts on False Teachings* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1994), 28-29.

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say, uncle Steve. While I am at work, Uncle Steve rapes and sodomizes my son. Should I call the authorities?? If I am a believer in reincarnation, then I must realize that this "evil" is an illusion, number one, and number two, this "evil" was brought on my son most likely because of something my son did in a previous incarnation. Something my son did in a previous lifetime demands that this happened to him in this lifetime. (Or something I did, or my wife did, or whomever.) Only recently have some Indian people rejected reincarnation and started to kill the massive infestation of disease-ridden rodents that inhabit India's cities.¹⁵ These rodents carry and transmit many diseases as well as destroying and infecting large portions of food that could have made it to the starving population. Most, however, continue to nurture or ignore these disease-carrying animals in the belief that they are a soul stuck in the cosmic wheel. This is just one example of a horrible religious practice that is part of the many destructive practices that are hurting precious people. The caste system mentioned before is another that promotes and encourages racism, malnourishment, lack of education, and death.

PAIN & SUFFERING

Another problem in pantheism is God's inability to deal with or solve the problem of evil. In fact He is the cause of it... remember, pantheists believe all is God. Pantheism may try to ignore this problem by claiming that sin and suffering is an illusion (maya), but let's bring this philosophy down to the real world. Try to convince a man dying of cancer or a mother who just lost a child, that evil and suffering are merely illusions. Even if evil is an illusion, the illusion itself is real. In either case, evil exists. As Geisler asked, "If evil is not real, what is the origin of the illusion? Why has it been so persistent and why does it seem so real? ... How can evil *arise* from a 'God' who is absolutely and necessarily good?"¹⁶ The answer must be that if pantheism is true, God cannot be good, and He must be the *source* of evil.

¹⁵ From a show seen by the author a few years ago on *The Learning Channel*.

¹⁶ Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 187.

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Between karmic destiny and the god[s] of pantheism and its dealing with pain and suffering (and consequently the promotion of it) by claiming everything is an illusion just doesn't make sense. Mustn't we live as if this illusion is reality? Pantheists may pawn this inane philosophy on people, but no one can live it out consistently. And when a large population tries, like in India, one can see the fruits it produces.¹⁷ The promulgation of suffering and the inability of the religious Hindu to stop and help a suffering child or the rampant infestation of disease spreading (crop eating) pests, etc., is all a loud explanation of trying to live an unlivable philosophical proposition.

I have debated many persons over the Internet that are pantheists that will laud the evils done by the Christian church. In these debates I point out that these persons are in fact using the Judeo-Christian moral absolutes in interpreting history and delineating between "good" and "bad." For in Eastern thought, there is no "evil," or "good." If these people really believed it, they would come to realize there is no **real** good or evil!

The inquisitions, for instance, were merely the outgrowth of the victim's previous lives - incarnations. The Christian church, then, would merely be an instrument in perfecting these person's karmic lives. Therefore, when some here who are defending karmic destiny in other strains speak of the horrible atrocities committed by "religion," they are not consistently living out their philosophy of life and death. The victims of the Inquisitions or Crusades then are merely being "paid back" for something they themselves did in a previous life. It is the *works these people did prior* that creates much of the evil upon them now. So, in the future when people like **John** (a believer in reincarnation) says that Christianity isn't what it purports to be because of the evil it has committed in the past, I will remind such people that evil is merely an

¹⁷ See, Rabi R. Maharaj, *Death of a Guru: A Remarkable True Story of One Man's Search for Truth* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1977).

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illusion (maya – Hinduism; Sunyata – Buddhism) to be overcome, as karmic reincarnation teaches.¹⁸

In addition, monistic philosophies provide no explanation for the diversity within creation. If "God is truly one," the only reality, then diversity (all creation) is part of the illusion of duality. That includes all morality, all human hopes, and aspirations. In the end, despite having an infinite reference point, we are left with only a destructive nihilistic outlook on life. To think otherwise is to adopt or borrow portions of another worldview. As Charles Manson noted, "If all is one, what is bad?"

The desire of every Buddhist, for example, is to be free from the problems of life – to be free from pain and suffering. As the Buddhist saying goes, "As the water of the sea tastes of salt, so all life tastes of suffering." Their goal is to develop a detachment from life. Buddha taught that desire is the root of all evil. To exist is to suffer! The answer to suffering is Nirvana (annihilation), which is achievable by successive reincarnation. Hence, Buddhism insists, "Those who love a hundred have a hundred woes. Those who love ten have ten woes. Those who love one have one woe. Those who love none have no woes." The goal of life is to reach the stage of desirelessness. When one ceases to desire, we have overcome the burden of life. How one is supposed to be desireless without desiring that quality is a problem few have any time (or desire?) to answer.

CONVERSATIONS WITH GOD?

Many claims of divination and channeling are becoming more and more accepted today. Neal Donald Walsch's book, *Conversations with God*, is just that, a supposed conversation with God. Helen Schucman's *A Course In Miracles*, is yet another example of a literal "encounter" with God. *The Urantia*

¹⁸ From an on-line debate the author had. You could also include the deaths of innocent civilians in the current Iraqi war... these innocents that died by a misplaced U. S. bomb deserved so due to a previous life choice. The critic of this war who is a New Age student of Eastern thought loses all power to criticize such "evil" acts.

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book is yet another popular “encounter” with “God,” as well as the other innumerable channelings of the “true” Jesus or God. What all these conversations have in common is that the Jesus of the Bible is a false, or misunderstood figure, not to mention that the following new revelation holds the true understanding of Jesus.

Neal Walsh, or should I say God (with whom he conversed), says that pantheism is the true religious belief to be accepted. That we are “all one with God” (in monistic terms) is the central, recurring theme in his books. Walsch asserts it even before his friend “God” starts talking, and it is repeated often. Since we are one with God, we are divine, and God tells Walsch, in one of his little ditties, “Your Will and Mine, is that will which is Divine”¹⁹. Not surprisingly, we learn that as part of Walsch’s spiritual journey before writing the *Conversation with God* books, he spent time with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, whom he claims taught him about a God who would **never judge**; then he explored several religions, including Buddhism, finally becoming an enthusiastic follower of a woman named Terry Cole-Whittaker, who was a minister with The United Church of Religious Science, a New Thought church. So prior to publishing this book, Walsch already believed in this particular God that he is now speaking with.

In fact, Walsch is told by “God,” much like in Hinduism and Buddhism, that he can really live this truth out, and be one with the All that Is, then others may call you “God, or the Son of God, or the Buddha, the Enlightened One, the Master, the Holy One--or, even, the Savior,” because Walsch will be saving everyone from forgetting their Oneness²⁰ since we are all “The Alpha and the Omega.”²¹

¹⁹ Neal Donald Walsch, *Conversations with God: An Uncommon Dialogue* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Pub, 1997), 1:224. 1:224 -- the **one** represents book one, out of the three, of the *Conversations with God*; **224** refers to the *page number* in book one.

²⁰ 1:409

²¹ 1:249

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Another perplexing problem that Walsch's God leads us into is that of right and wrong, what philosophers call the "ought," or "duty," of our conscience. I will let C. S. Lewis deal with explaining this more in-depth, and again, I apologize for the length of this paper, but it will be worth its weight in enlightenment:

Everyone has heard people quarrelling. Sometimes it sounds funny and sometimes it sounds merely unpleasant, however it sounds, I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the kind of things they say. They say things like: "How'd you like it if anyone did the same to you?" – "That's my seat, I was there first" – "leave him alone, he isn't doing you any harm" – "Why should you shove in first?" – "Come on, you promised" – "Give me a bit of your orange, I gave you a bit of mine." People say things like that every day, from educated grown-ups to little children.

Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man's behavior does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of behavior, which he expects the other man to know about. And the other man seldom replies: "To hell with your standard!" Nearly always he tries to make out that what he has been doing does not really go against the standard [thus proving the standard], or that if it does there are some "special" excuse. He pretends there is some special reason in this particular case why the person who took the seat first should not keep it, or that things were quite different when he was given the bit of orange, or that something has turned up which lets him off from keeping his promise. It looks, in fact, very much like both parties had in mind some kind of Law or Rule of fair play or decent behavior or morality or whatever you like to call it, about which they really agreed. *And they had.* If they had not, they might, of course, fight like animals, but they could not quarrel in the human sense of the word. Quarreling means trying to show that the other

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man is in the wrong. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of understanding or agreement as to what Right or Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a hockey player had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of hockey.

Now this Law or Rule about Right and Wrong used to be called the Law of Nature. Nowadays, when we talk of the “laws of nature” we usually mean things like gravitation, or heredity, or the laws of chemistry. But when the older thinkers called the Law of Right and Wrong “the Law of Nature,” they really meant the Law of Human Nature. The idea was that, just as all bodies are governed by the law of gravitation and organisms by biological laws, so the creature called man also had his law – with great difference, that a body could choose to disobey or obey this Law of Nature.²²

Neal Walsch is on opposite sides of this well understood concept of distinguishing between right and wrong, good, or bad:

Walsch: Are you saying I shouldn't feel bad about the starving children...?

God: There are no “shoulds” or “shouldn'ts” in God's world.²³

In Walsch's world there are no wrong choices, for God told him: “I have never set down a ‘right’ or ‘wrong,’ a ‘do’ or a ‘don't.’ To do so would be to strip you completely of your greatest gift — the opportunity to do as you please and experience the results of that; the chance to create yourself anew in the image and likeness of Who You Really Are.”²⁴ Neal's God teaches hedonism in other words.

²² C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1943), 17-18.

²³ 1:38.

²⁴ 1:39.

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Another “philosopher” said something like Neal’s statement above (that is, “the opportunity to do as you please”), this revelation was given by a spirit that appeared to him while he was touring the pyramids in Egypt and it said simply, “do what you will.” The man I speak of is Aleister Crowley, who has been venerated by the likes of the Beatles, Daryl Hall (of Hall & Oats fame), Ozzy Osbourne, and Jimmy Page (Led Zeppelin), all of whom were, or still are, pantheists.²⁵ Crowley also said “Lust. Enjoy all the things of sense. Fear not that any God shall deny thee for this.” These statements are very similar and were both received by supposed conversations with a spirit being. The only difference being that Aleister Crowley founded modern Satanism in Britain, and Walsch is merely forging a “New Gospel.”

Walsch’s God adds to this “New Gospel” this phrase, “OURS IS NOT A BETTER WAY, OURS IS MERELY ANOTHER WAY.”²⁶ This is a phrase, always in all-caps, introduced earlier in the book without explanation, which is now declared to be part of The New Gospel. There will be a “shift” to this thinking, God announces, although those opposed to The New Gospel might cause “chaos.”²⁷ Stating that **it is** the “only message that can change the course of human history,”²⁸ which is a statement that his New

²⁵ The reason I will be pointing out what religiously held philosophy these and other people hold to is to clarify what worldview these people are; **worldview:**

People have presuppositions, and they will live more consistently on the basis of these presuppositions than even they themselves may realize. By “*presuppositions*” we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic worldview, the grid through which he sees the world. Presuppositions rest upon that which a person considers to be the truth of what exists. People’s presuppositions lay a grid for all they bring forth into the external world. Their presuppositions also provide the basis for their values and therefore the basis for their decisions. “*As a man thinketh, so he is,*” is really profound. An individual is not just the product of the forces around him. He has a mind, an inner world. Then, having thought, a person can bring forth actions into the external world and thus influence it. People are apt to look at the outer theater of action, forgetting the actor who “*lives in the mind*” and who therefore is the true actor in the external world. The inner thought world determines the outward action. Most people catch their presuppositions from their family and surrounding society the way a child catches measles. But people with more understanding realize that their presuppositions should be chosen after a careful consideration of what worldview is true. When all is done, when all the alternatives have been explored, “*not many men are in the room*” – that is, although worldviews have many variations, there are not many basic worldviews or presuppositions – Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1976), 19-20.

²⁶ 1:375.

²⁷ 1:404

²⁸ 1:373.

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Gospel is superior. **Thus, God proves that he is not above judgment, as he said he was. In fact, he is contradicting what he has said about himself and what he has been teaching Walsch.**

This "valueless" value system of pantheism, that is, everything is God, and everything is acceptable, leads God to say, "So stop making value judgments."²⁹ Having posited a pantheistic, valueless universe, "God" tells Walsch that the typical human attitude is to attack, reject, or label as wrong that with which we do not agree (thus protecting himself [Walsch] from critical examination). Then he says, "In this you err, for you create only half a universe. And you cannot even understand your half when you have rejected out of hand the other."³⁰ Yet Walsch's God does the very same thing! In rejecting any value judgment, he has rejected just about everything. By his own standard, this God errs in saying, "You err." This God of Walsch's is self-defeating, or, irrational. In one stroke he says not to attack or judge, in another he says that Christian beliefs are wrong.

At one point, God tells Walsch that the idea of a God who does not punish is considered heretical, and that he (Walsch) might have to "abandon the church in order to know God. Without a doubt, you will have to at least abandon some of the church's teachings."³¹ There is no reference to other religions. Walsch's God is unusually preoccupied with abandoning "the church's teachings." Since life is an illusion, so is evil, and we should accept everything (except the "church's teachings," take note that God is contradicting himself here), even things we disagree with. "You would have us embrace the devil himself, wouldn't You?" challenges Walsch. To which God replies: "How else will you heal him?"³² Meanwhile... Adolf Hitler did the best he could with the knowledge he had. "The mistakes Hitler made

²⁹ 1:79

³⁰ 1:84

³¹ 1:67

³² 1:321

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did no harm or damage to those whose deaths he caused. Those souls were released from their earthly bondage,"³³ comments like these are repulsive to most individuals!

We must abandon Christianity, but embrace Hitler? All while believing, we are gods. You know? there is a verse in the Bible that sounds strikingly familiar:

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.”³⁴

COURSE IN MIRACLES

Much like all the above, *A Course in Miracles* is just as imbued with Eastern mythology. The author, a professor of psychology at Columbia University, Helena Schucman, wrote this textbook via a spirit speaking to her as she dictated (automatic writing^{35,36}). What is perhaps the primary mistake of Christianity, according to the Schucman, er, excuse me, Jesus, is Man’s inability to distinguish between that which is real and that which is illusion. As the Course explains, man has not left Heaven. Man is still in the presence of God, but has created this illusionary world from “...false perceptions. It is born of error, and it has not left its source,”³⁷ because man believes he is separated from God, through his own ego and mistaken beliefs, man has created the reality in which he now finds himself.

³³ 1:42

³⁴ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), cf. Gen 3:4-5.

³⁵ Ron Rhodes, *The Culting of America* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1994), 120.

³⁶ Debra Lardie, Dan Lioy and Paul Ingram, eds., *Concise Dictionary of the Occult and New Age* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2000), 35.

“...A phenomenon in which a spirit entity takes control of a human host and causes the medium to write apart from her of his awareness. Automatic writing typically occurs when the medium enters a trancelike state and establishes communication with the entity, such as a spirit of a deceased person.”

³⁷ Helena Schucman, *A Course in Miracles* (Mill Valley, CA: Foundation For Inner Peace, 1975), vol 2, 403; quoted in: Tal Brooke, *The Conspiracy to Silence the Son of God* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 120.

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Much like Hinduism, if the world is an illusion or dream-state, then by necessity, everything that the physical body does in this make-believe world must also be an illusion. This would necessarily include the false actions of sin and death. As volume 2 of the *Course in Miracles*, "...sin is not real, and all that you believe must come from sin will never happen, for it has no cause."³⁸ "The world you see is an illusion of a world. God did not create it, for what he creates must be eternal as himself."³⁹

Again, I have already shown how this idea is self-refuting. The sad sidenote in all this is that Professor Schucman spent the last two years of her life in the blackest psychotic depression Father Benedict J. Groeshel, C.F.R., who gave the eulogy at Schucman's funeral, has ever seen.⁴⁰ Ironically, one does find truth in the writings of the Course. The following quote would be humorous if it were not for the sad ending of Mrs. Schucman's life, and the influence the Course has had on thousands of individuals. In chapter 9, section IV, paragraph 8, of the text, page 170 states:

|"Anyone who elects a totally insane guide must be totally insane himself."⁴¹

Chapter 25, section VII, paragraph 8, of the text, page 533, again states:

|"It would be madness to entrust salvation to the insane."⁴²

Much like Walsch's "conversation," all religions are on the right track, *except* Christianity. Similar to Walsh's quoting of God, "Your Will and Mine, is that will which is Divine,"⁴³ we find that Dr. Schucman's

³⁸ Ibid., p. 179; p. 120.

³⁹ John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 1-16.

⁴⁰ "A Course in Miracles," by Edward R. Hryczyk. Taken from: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/NEWAGE/Course.TXT> (last accessed 11-03-08).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ 1:224.

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“God is incomplete without [us],”⁴⁴ and there being “no difference between your will and God’s.”⁴⁵ One of the modern popularizers of *A Course in Miracles* is Kenneth Wapnick, who has written many books on the *Course*. Wapnick claims to be a Catholic Christian, but in an interview with the SCP Journal in 1987, Wapnick frankly admitted that:

“The Course is not compatible with Biblical Christianity. There are three basic reasons. One is the Course’s idea that God did not create the world. The second is the Course’s teaching that Jesus was not the only Son of God. The third involves the Course’s assertion that Jesus did not suffer and die for our sins.”⁴⁶

BOTTOM LINE

And really, this is the bottom line. The fact is,

“that while worldviews at first appear to proliferate, they are made up of answers to question to questions which have only a limited number of answers. For example, to the question of prime reality, only two basic answers can be given: Either it is the universe that is self-existent and has always existed, or it is a transcendent God who is self-existent and has always existed. Theism and deism claim the latter; naturalism, Eastern pantheistic monism, New Age and post-modernism claim the former.”⁴⁷

Both cannot be right at the same time, for this would violate the *Law of Noncontradiction*. Some who espouse some form of eastern religion or New Age teaching will dismiss an appeal to logical consistency. These belief systems (Eastern thought and New Age) often encourage people to hold contradictory ideas together. One professor, William Lane Craig, frankly admits that such ideas are, “frankly crazy and

⁴⁴ Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1996), 165; quoted from John Ankerberg and John Weldon, *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 1-16

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴⁶ Texe Marrs, *Texe Marrs Book of New Age Cults & Religions*, (Shiloh Court, TX: Living Truth Publishers, 1990), 86-87.

⁴⁷ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 194.

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unintelligible.”⁴⁸ The claim that logic and other self-evident principles are not universally true “seems to be both self-refuting and arbitrary.”⁴⁹ He asks us to consider the claim that “God cannot be described by prepositions governed by the Law of Noncontradiction.”⁵⁰ If this statement is true, then it itself expresses a proposition that is not governed by the Law of Noncontradiction. However, that means that its contrary is also true: God can be described by prepositions governed by the law of contradiction.⁵¹ The following is a classical approach⁵² to showing the inadequacies that permeate worldviews that accept pantheism:

Most nontheistic religions have affirmed one of the many forms of pantheism, all of which in some way identify or equate God with the “All” – so that God is in some sense the ultimate and only Reality. Pantheism is closely related to monism,⁵³ according to which reality is ultimately one and not many, a unity rather than a plurality. The rediscovery of Eastern (particularly Indian) culture and the promulgation of Eastern thought in the West have stimulated pantheistic thinking in Western culture, notably in what has come to be known as the New Age movement.

[Norman] Geisler notes that pantheism is a comprehensive philosophy that focuses on the unity of reality and seeks to acknowledge the immanence and absolute nature of God. In spite of these positive insights, pantheism is an inadequate worldview because “it is actually unaffirmable by man.”⁵⁴ Specifically, it is self-defeating for a pantheist to claim that individual

⁴⁸ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Which are what Eastern philosophies and the New Age teach, for all intent and purposes.

⁵¹ Craig, 42.

⁵² Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 113-114.

⁵³ “The metaphysical view that reality is fundamentally one. The monist thus holds that the plurality of objects we seem to experience is merely appearance or is less than fully real.” C. Stephen Evans, *Pocket Dictionary of Apologetics & Philosophy of Religion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 77.

⁵⁴ Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bake Book House, 1976), 187.

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finite selves are less than real.⁵⁵ To assert "I believe that I am not an individual" is to utter a self-refuting statement (because it assumes the existence of the individual who says "I" while at the same time denying it). Pantheism wrongly assumes "that whatever is not really ultimate is not ultimately or actually real."⁵⁶ Pantheism also cannot adequately account for evil (its assertion that evil is an illusion is meaningless, since pain that is felt is real), and it is unable even to distinguish good from evil (since in theory all is one, nothing can be evil as opposed to good). Geisler also argues that to say that God and the universe are one says nothing meaningful about God and is indistinguishable from atheism.⁵⁷

Using the laws of logic, we can see that Eastern thought breaks down under examination. Which popular culture does not do, nor know how to do. So when Oprah has Deepak Chopra come before her audience and teach the occult medical method of "Maharishi Ayur-Veda" (a Westernized form of Hindu ayurvedic practice), along with TM (Trans Meditation⁵⁸), they neither know the self-refuting aspects of the philosophy Deepak is teaching; or do they know of the history and negative health effects of Trans Meditation.⁵⁹ TM was first banned in New Jersey public schools, other school districts soon followed.

WHICH WORLDVIEW?

Worldviews should be tested not only in the philosophy classroom but also in the laboratory of life. It is one thing for a worldview to pass certain theoretical tests (reason and experience); it is another for the

⁵⁵ This is an important concept to grasp.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 188.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁵⁸ Maharishi Mehesh Yogi re-fashioned TM for Western consumption by replacing much of its religious terminology with psychological terms and emphasized the pragmatic concern for immediate results (rather than through the long karmic cycles). It was brought to Los Angeles first in 1958. The Beatles even followed this guru for some time, until even they realized that this guru was a fraud. John Lennon called him "a lecherous womanizer." After the 70's, Maharishi re-packaged it again, stripping TM of all religious connotations and replacing it the language of psychology. Taken from, George Mather and Larry Nichols, ed., *Dictionary of Cults, Sects, Religions and the Occult* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 277-279. I have actual video footage of his compound and brainwashing techniques he used here in the U. S. in the 80's, he was finally indicted and sent home to India. (Video: *Meditation: A Pathway to Deception*).

⁵⁹ TM was first banned in New Jersey public schools in 1977, other school districts soon followed. Ibid., 278.

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worldview also to pass an important practical test, namely, can the person who professes that worldview live *consistently* in harmony with the system he professes? Or do we find that he is forced to live according to beliefs borrowed from a competing system? Such a discovery, I am suggesting, should produce more than embarrassment.

Only the presuppositions of historic Christianity “both adequately explain and correspond with the two environments in which every man must live: the external world with its form and complexity; and the internal world of the man’s own characteristics as a human being. This ‘inner world’ includes such human qualities ‘as a desire for significance, love, and meaning, and fear of nonbeing, among others.’”⁶⁰

This is a point I explained to a family member:

Dave, when a Buddhist or Hindu move into a new home or apartment building in, say Ha Noi, Veitnam, or, Bangalore, India, they are living in opposition to their worldview. You see science and even mathematics are constructs that are viewed in the logic and empiricism of Western culture and its worldview. Eastern philosophy says these “things” are mere illusions, and at best are fruitless endeavors. However, it is this same understanding of physics, math, and geometry that they now live under that we here in our worldview take for granted. So the Hindu or Buddhist, even if they do not consciously think of it, must reject their worldview to live in ours (a building constructed using Western principles). Much like when a Christian Scientist (a mind science cult) breaks his or her arm, and they have been raised to believe that the reality around them is an illusion, they still go to the hospital and get a cast.⁶¹ They are living in rejection of their worldview while adopting that of others.

⁶⁰ Thomas Morris, *Francis Schaeffer’s Apologetics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 21.

⁶¹ Christian Scientists do not believe in the reality of sickness, or injury, all reality is illusion. So when the children of this religious belief get sick, they are routinely ignored, and many succumb to illnesses that medicine can easily heal. A good book on the subject is Dr. Linda S. Kramer’s book, *The Religion That Kills: Christian Science: Abuse, Neglect, and Mind Control* (Lafayette, LA: Huntington House, 2000).

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And any scientific theory, educational construct, or religion that cannot satisfy its own demands (e.g., a pantheist saying he doesn’t exist, but in order to say so must exist), is illogical, not because I say so, but because the rules of logic say so. One may not believe in the rules of logic, but like the Hindu or Buddhist not believing in the reality of math, geometry, or physics, they suspend their beliefs to accept that of the West in order to “live in reality.”⁶²

I contend that while a person will stand in front of me and claim to be a believer in a pantheistic worldview – whether a Hindu or New Ager – that person will almost in the same sentence, use principles in logic and speech that are at variance with their worldview. They will speak of themselves as “I,” but they reject such a position. This leads to confusion. Theism, especially Christian theism, better responds to the real world than other worldviews.

Theism affirms the existence of evil, by doing so we can then deal with it. Rape, in the theistic worldview, is always wrong and in all places in the cosmos. Pantheism says rape is an illusion, atheism says that if it benefits the survival of the fittest, then it is of value (some time in our evolutionary past, then, rape may have been the only way for the species to survive). You see, these ideas have consequences.

CONSEQUENCES?

On a plaque in Auschwitz today the words of Hitler are clearly stated:

⁶² A discussion between myself and a family member.

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“I freed Germany from the stupid and degrading fallacies of conscience and morality... we will train young people before whom the world will tremble. I want young people capable of violence – imperious, relentless and cruel.”⁶³

Hitler was creating young people whom the world would tremble at, how? By removing the moral conscience of its people. Compared to the words of Hitler’s crony, Mussolini:

“Everything I have said and done in these last years is relativism by intuition.... If relativism signifies contempt for fixed categories and men who claim to be bearers of an objective, immortal truth... then there is nothing more relativistic than fascistic attitudes and activity.... From the fact that all ideologies are of equal value, that all ideologies are mere fictions, the modern relativist infers that everybody has the right to create for himself his own ideology and to attempt to enforce it with all the energy of which he is capable.”⁶⁴

If atheism, for example, gains its life-sustaining support from atheistic evolution, then it cannot shut the floodgates to the tidal waves of its philosophical implications. Note that Sir Arthur Keith, a militant anti-Christian physical anthropologist, made that connection as well:

“The German Fuhrer, as I have consistently maintained, is an evolutionist; he has consistently sought to make the practices of Germany conform to the theory of evolution.”⁶⁵

It is important to keep this perspective. Augustine warned that it is not wise to judge a philosophy by its abuse. But the domination of the strong over the weak is not the abuse of natural selection; it is at the heart of it. Hitler unintentionally exposed atheism and dragged it where it was reluctantly, but logically,

⁶³ Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishers, 1994), 23.

⁶⁴ Mussolini, *Diuturna* pp. 374-77, quoted in: Peter Kreeft, *A Refutation of Moral Relativism: Interviews with an Absolutist* (Ft. Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 1999), 18.

⁶⁵ Sir Arthur Keith, *Evolution and Ethics* (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1947), 230.

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forced into its consequences. The denuding of people, in every sense of the word, that took place in the concentration camps, brought about the logical outworking of the demise of God and the extermination of moral law. Keep in mind that to call such acts – such as those committed in Auschwitz – evil, is to adopt the theistic view of life. For pantheism and atheism cannot call such acts morally evil in the same sense a theist can.

TO CONCLUDE

I am not arguing that all non-Christian religions as well as non-Christian worldviews are false. Rather, I am arguing that non-Christian belief systems incorporate significant truths, but also contain grave errors about God and his relation to the world, and in the end must be deemed inadequate. Kenneth Boa and Robert Bowman explain it well when they said:⁶⁶

Thus, non-Christian belief systems do contain truth, but as a whole their final answers to life’s most fundamental questions are false.... C. S. Lewis frequently asserted that other religions contained much truth. “And it should (at least in my judgment) be made clear that we are not pronouncing all other religions totally false, but rather saying that in Christ whatever is true in other all religions is consummated and perfected.”⁶⁷

The hope here is that those who read this essay will have some resources to better understand their own belief and look to the more perfect union of it in Christ. I want the reader to take note of this short poem:

If **chance** be the Father of all flesh,
Disaster is his rainbow in the sky,
And when you hear:

⁶⁶ Kenneth D. Boa and Robert M. Bowman Jr., *Faith Has Its Reasons: An Integrative Approach to Defending Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2001), 113.

⁶⁷ C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1970), 244.

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...State of Emergency!

Sniper Kills Ten!

Troops on Rampage!

Whites Go Looting!

Bomb Blasts School!...

It is but the sound of man worshiping his maker.⁶⁸

Robert Hume comments in his book, *The World's Living Religions*, that there are three features of the Christian faith that “cannot be paralleled anywhere among the religions of the world.” These include the character of God as a loving Heavenly Father, the character of the founder of Christianity as the Son of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit. Further, he says:

The nine founders among the eleven living religions in the world had characters which attracted many devoted followers (during their own lifetime, and still larger numbers during the centuries of subsequent history. They were humble in certain respects, yet they were also confident of a great religious mission. Two of the nine, Mahavira and Buddha, were men so strongminded and self-reliant that, according to the records, they displayed no need of any divine help, though they both taught the inexorable cosmic law of Karma. They are not reported as having possessed any consciousness of a supreme personal deity. Yet they have been strangely deified by their followers. Indeed, they themselves have been worshipped, even with multitudinous idols.

⁶⁸ Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 133-134.

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All of the nine founders of religion, with the exception of Jesus Christ, are reported in their respective sacred scriptures as having passed through a preliminary period of uncertainty, or of searching for religious light. Confucius, late in life, confessed his own sense of shortcomings and his desire for further improvement in knowledge and character. All the founders of the non-Christian religions evinced inconsistencies in their personal character; some of them altered their practical policies under change of circumstances.

Jesus Christ alone is reported as having had a consistent God-consciousness, a consistent character himself, and a consistent program for his religion. The most remarkable and valuable aspect of the personality of Jesus Christ is the comprehensiveness and universal availability of his character, as well as its own loftiness, consistency, and sinlessness.⁶⁹

And it is this “consistency” that separates the Judeo-Christian faith from all others. Amen!?

⁶⁹ Robert Hume, *The World's Living Religions* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), 285-286.